



Reading fictions:

*reading reader identities in Black
Country further education communities*

by

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A thesis presented to The University of Birmingham for the degree of
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Abstract

In this thesis I seek to draw on post-structuralist perspectives to identify, analyse and unsettle the discursive constructions of 'reading' and 'reader' that pervade the sixteen to nineteen further education (FE) context. I make use of the theoretical perspectives of Bernstein, Bourdieu and Foucault to explore ways subjects are situated and situate themselves within and without discourses about reading and readers within a particular modality of practice.

The research for this thesis was undertaken in the Black Country in the West Midlands, a region traditionally described by government inspectorates as socially disadvantaged and underachieving in literacy particularly and education more generally, and includes data drawn from a region wide reading habits survey, small group interviews, auto-ethnographic narratives and curriculum documentation. The thesis contends that for many sixteen to nineteen year olds in this region, including some of the participants in this research, perceived underachievement in reading may be as much to do with a failure to recognise, realise or resist (wittingly or unwittingly) institutionally 'desirable' reader identities or 'preferred' reader behaviours than it is to do with technical competence or 'skills'. This thesis problematises the simplistic notion of an achievement / underachievement binary arguing that these signifiers function not to describe the 'reader' in any accurate or 'real' sense but rather that they act as mechanisms to protect the insulation between categories (that the problem student may be seen to threaten) by delegitimising and representing as feminised other the complex, often rich texture of students' 'out of school / college' literacy life-worlds ('la culture libre', Bourdieu, 2002) and concealing the socio-political structures and relations that shape and reference what it means to read and be a reader within the domain of an educational institution. I argue that a reflexive, critical literacy curriculum embedded in post-structuralist feminist understandings of language, literacy and power relations is a necessary alternative response if we are to offer students from economically disadvantaged and minority backgrounds (Gee, 1999) an education that is "worthy of its name" (Apple,

2004). Teachers, teacher educators and teacher education programmes, I further argue, are crucially implicated in this call for transformation.

In an attempt to achieve homology between the theoretical perspectives I draw upon in my research and analysis and the practice of writing, and being the 'author' of a thesis, I have tried to interrogate my work and experience with those same theories. I aim to present a reflexive piece of work that explores the situatedness of the PhD as product and process, marking it as a literacy event that produces text that seeks to mediate social relations in particular kinds of ways.

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‘ She’ is definitely other in herself. That is undoubtedly the reason she is called temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious – not to mention her language in which ‘ she’ goes off in all directions and which ‘ he’ is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Contradictory words seem a little crazy to the logic of reason, and inaudible for him to listen with ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance. In her statements...woman retouches herself constantly. She just barely separates from herself some chatter, an exclamation, a half-secret, a sentence left in suspense – when she returns to it, it is only to set out again from another point of pleasure or pain. One must listen to her differently in order to hear an ‘ *other meaning*’ which is *constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized*. For when ‘ she’ says something it is no longer identical to what she means. (Irigaray, 1981 in Humm ed. 1992: 204, italics in the original)

“She” is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious...not to mention her language, in which “she” sets off in all directions leaving “him” unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand. For in what she says, too, at least when she dares, woman is constantly touching herself. She steps ever so slightly, aside from herself with a murmur, an exclamation, a whisper, a sentence left unfinished...When she returns, it is to set off again from elsewhere. From another point of pleasure, or of pain. One would have to listen with another ear, as if hearing an “*other meaning*” *always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them*. For if “she” says something, it is not, it is already no longer, identical with what she means. What she says is never identical with anything, moreover; rather, it is contiguous. (Irigaray, 1985: 29 translated by Caroline Porter, italics in the original)

...professionals...who do not read and write anything outside of work-related material should perhaps not be called literate; if they're not working they don't read and write. (Smith 1989: 354)

Prologue¹

This thesis ‘opens up’ an exploration of the relationship between identity and achievement in reading, taking as its focus a case study of 16 – 19 year olds studying at Black Country further education colleges. Black Country young people represent a group often characterised through quantitative measurement, league tables and inspection reports, as underachieving in ‘schoolled’ literacy.

I make the distinction here to acknowledge schooled literacy to be only one of a range of literacies that one might engage in, and because we know very little about the local or social literacy literacies of individuals or groups within the Black Country beyond the anecdotal. Indeed a key recommendation of this project will be that research might be taken by and with communities, following Barton and Hamilton’s (1998) *Local Literacies* model, to enable deconstruction of these prevalent notions of a community in deficit and to make visible the literacy life-worlds of Black Country readers.

At the same time this is intended to be a critically reflective account of the process of researching and representing research through which I attempt to achieve homology between the theoretical positionings I draw upon in my analysis and the practice of writing a PhD. I try to present a reflexive piece of work that explores the situatedness of the PhD as product and process

I started this thesis as a ‘teacher’ and ‘curriculum-manager’ concerned with and by the performance of my students against public measures of literacy. I was driven by what I felt to be a liberal agenda concerned with ‘change’, ‘improvement’ and ‘empowerment’, my concerns were with and for raising

¹ **n. 1a** a preliminary speech, poem, etc., esp. introducing a play (cf. EPILOGUE). **b.** the actor speaking the prologue. **2.** (usu. foll. by *to*) any act or event serving as an introduction.

learner achievement through the harnessing of more dynamic, effective classroom interventions. However the thesis I have ended up writing, and re-writing, does not easily translate to that kind of better practice formula and in fact sits uncomfortably alongside these early intentions. The process of researching and writing about reading, and in turn researching and writing about research has forced me, as Bourdieu urges (1991) to pose, new and important questions about the meanings of the terms 'I' have so freely inhabited; teacher, student, achievement, reading and reader, and the parameters and paradigms within which 'professional question posing' tends to function and operate. I am learning to take nothing for granted not even the 'I' that works here only to elude the fiction of its construction, as Foucault reminds "one must take responsibility for inventing or producing one's own self" (1984: 39).

I explore the fundamental question of the 'conditions of possibility' of my professional questioning-posing and following Foucault's method the starting points and rationale for the project become 'data' for analysis and deconstruction. These questions of 'content' merge with questions of inscription and representation as the thesis turns in on itself. 'I' is positioned and re-positioned in the beginnings of an address to Foucault's questions:

What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used? What are the places it has been used, how can it circulate and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? (Foucault, 1984:120)

This text is an exploration of how I might be positioned by and position myself within and without understandings about 'thesis writing' and how the material 'visibility' of this thesis interplays with all these issues.

As the meanings of 'literacy' and 'teacher' are re-thought I consider dominant meanings and possible meanings - literacy teacher as agent for whom and for what? What is literacy and what might it be for? Reading is opened up as a contested site at which competing discourses mobilise to codify and legitimise

material objects and articulate ways of knowing about reading that express and legitimise objects for consumption in the technologising of self.

Original questions about how to enable students to achieve as readers within the institutional context are necessarily deconstructed by analysis of what it means to be a reader and what it means to be 'literate' within a further education setting. I go on to explore how individuals situate themselves within and are situated by such discourse/s - my focus shifts to an exploration of identity 'management', allowing thereby that learners are not only subject to but have agency in constructions of their reading identities.

I attempt to anchor these alternative understandings of literacies to a notion of critical pedagogy which sees reading and writing as fundamental to transformative practice/s. In doing so it has been essential to experiment with the 'representation' of the thesis, to explore what might it mean to write 'other' to traditional academic practices.

This has, in turn, led me to re-consider how and why it is that I find myself 'writing a thesis'. What are the origins of my PhD? What are the conditions within which it has come to 'be'? And how does the fact of this act of 'authoring' impact on my own (literacy) identity? It is in many ways the ultimate paradox for me that this attempt to characterise and deconstruct 'institutionally legitimate' notions of literacy simultaneously seeks to 'earn' me a higher status positioning within, and in terms of, that which it seeks to de-stabilise.

Act One

Beginning/ s

...the 'self' that writes this is neither the constant rationalist nor the presenter of a totalising narrative. (Rhedding-Jones, 1997: 197)

The problem of beginnings is one of the problems that, if allowed to, will confront one with equal intensity on a practical and on a theoretical level. Every writer knows that the choice of a beginning for what he will write is crucial not only because it determines much of what follows but also because a work's beginning is, practically speaking, the main entrance to what it offers. Moreover, in retrospect we can regard a beginning as the point at which in a given work, the writer departs from all other works; a beginning immediately establishes relationships with works already existing, relationships of either continuity or antagonism or some mixture of both. But at the moment we start to detail the features of a beginning...we necessarily make certain special distinctions. (Said, 1997: 3)

My research could have been produced as a novel or an anthology of poetry; but I wanted a doctorate, and therefore selected my particular academic genres carefully, with a close eye to what might be possible now it is the mid-1990s (Rhedding-Jones, 1997:201)

One writes before knowing what there is to say and how to say it, to find out if possible...Obviously the only interesting thing for the philosopher is to think what he can't manage to think: without thatI wonder what the hell he'd be doing (Foucault quoted in Bennington 1988:103-4)

You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room....So here you are now ready to attack the first lines of the first page. You prepare to recognize the unmistakable tone of the author. No. You don't recognise it at all. But now that you think about it, who ever said this author had an unmistakable tone? On the contrary he is known as an author who changes greatly from one book to the next. And in these very changes you recognize him as himself. (Calvino, 1992;3-5)

(Aside)

It is a January evening and a writer sits at home at her desk, an old dining table bought for a few pounds from a second-hand shop. The room is small, cluttered and multi-purpose, the floor is strewn with children's books and clothes and piles of unsorted papers litter the surfaces of the sofa, desk and shelves. The room adjoins the writer's daughter's bedroom where her daughter is falling asleep to a story-time tape, *Story-time with Postman Pat*, otherwise the house is quiet and it dark outside.

I am sitting at my desk at home, it is late and I'm wondering where and how to begin. My three year old daughter has swallowed a toy ring and is restless and refusing to sleep - she has spent the afternoon at the Children's hospital and wants comfort and closeness from me. I have a University deadline to meet, I am torn and have to make choices that make my hopes to 'be' academic feel ever more remote and abstract from the mother I am always trying better to be:

There are a range of discourses at play within the position of the 'good mother', the most dominant of which has long been the 'selfless' mother who places her caring role before everything else in her life...The 'selfless' mother devotes her life to her family and to 'reproducing new generations' (Silva, 1996:10). Indeed in 'child-centred accounts', the mother is often '...seen to exist only in relation to the child, rather than as a subject in her own right' (Marks, 1997:89) (Raddon, 2001:9)

I must write a beginning that pulls together the threads of my writing. I feel anxious, uneasy, how did I get to this beginning? How do I want this beginning to be? How should it be? I want to slip without effort, into the 'flow' of 'knowledge about', but feel the lack of 'knowing about' as a

force that keeps me distant from the place that I have such a short window of time to find. I panic as I feel my inability, at this 'available' moment, to forge for myself a dialogic space through which to understand 'myself' betwixt and within the competing and contradictory discourses of 'successful academic' and 'good mother' (Raddon, 2001). Like that task, this one feels awkward, self-conscious, unwieldy, unmanageable, outside of and beyond the 'me' that sits and struggles to work the 'ruins' (Lather 1997) of my identity to the backdrop of a Postman Pat soundtrack.

It is strange to be writing a beginning when so much other ground has already been covered. I know I should say something about why and how this project began, something cohesive that enables the reader to feel their way into the text, to recognise its shape and substance:

A thesis must be an original work which makes a significant contribution to the knowledge in or understanding of a particular field of study. It must contain material worthy of publication. It also demonstrates its relationship to the general corpus of knowledge in the field. In short it is the presentation of the results of original research in a critical and **scholarly fashion**. For these reasons it is essential that an **appropriate and satisfactory literary presentation is adopted** (University of Birmingham: 3 (my italics))

Where is the entrance? What colour is the door? How are the walls? Who is it that welcomes the new entrant, easing their anxieties with the assurances of the familiar, so that they might, comforted and relieved, sigh "ah yes, I know this place"... "like the foyer of a well-built structure or the departure lounge of for an intellectual journey which will be

neatly finished off with conclusions” (Stronach and Maclure: 1997:1). As writer and mother at this moment I fail to nurture and succour as I feel I should.

I feel the pull to signpost my recognition of “appropriacy” (Fairclough, 1989) and “satisfactory” to realise these landscapes in dutiful, honourable acknowledgement of their ancient undulations and time-weathered vistas. But like the postcards of places familiar but never visited my “scholarly fashion” is in sight but not to hand:

Essayist literacy is the privileged literacy practice within Western societies, constituting considerable cultural/linguistic capital: that is it is a socially valued and valuable practice, conferring prestige on its users (see Bourdieu 1991, 1994). The practice of essayist literacy is enacted and maintained through the formal institutions of schooling and in many ways is synonymous with formal schooling...the further up the ladder you go the closer you are expected and assumed to come to the ideals of essayist literacy...it becomes the central action of higher education (after Womack 1993); the highest certification is a Ph.D., which is awarded on the basis of a written thesis (and its defence). In order to be successful in HE, students must gain access to, that is learn the conventions of, essayist literacy (Lillis, 2001: 53)

The reader, perhaps my only audience an examiner, must be made to feel “as a fish in water” (Bourdieu in interview with Wacquant in Bourdieu, 1989:43) unselfconscious in the new territory that I must map through genre, register, tone and the confident voice of the ‘author’, ‘my’ voice but somehow also not a voice I am able to recognise:

Essayist Literacy is characterised as:

- Linear
- Valuing a particular type of explicitness

- Following one central point, theme or character at a time
- Written in the standard version of the language
- Informative rather than entertaining
- Leading to an effacement of individual and idiosyncratic identity

(After Gee: 1990: 63)

I feel lost as I meander through this thesis, like a child dressing up, always only playing at inhabiting the 'common sense' of how it should be done:

Thesis n. (*pl.* theses) 1 a) a proposition to be maintained or proved. 2. A dissertation, esp. by a candidate for a degree. (Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English, 1991: 1268)

My efforts seem pretence at cool 'logic', as I continue to ask 'have I struggled enough?' Instead it seems to me that it will be the material reality; bindings, page numbers, title, the framing and the academic transaction which keep this thesis 'together', a sort of faux 'finishing' through which 'I' depart without feeling that I have finally 'arrived', questions answered with more questions. As is usual with my 'private' relationship with academic endeavour, I secretly wonder if 'I' will get away with this? Will 'they' know that 'I' don't really know in the ways I feel I should? Can people like me really get PhDs?

The 'successful academic': devotes all of their time and energy to the University (Bagilhole, 1993; Currie et al, 2000; Harris et al, 1998); networks both in and out of work hours (Harris et al, 1998; Poole and Bornholt, 1998)...builds a reputation through their research (Bagilhole, 1993; Heward et al, 1997); is 'career-orientated', 'productive', 'hard-working' and 'enthusiastic', and publishes in the right publications (Harris et al, 1998)...

(Raddon, 2001: 5)

By this last question in particular I do not mean to be clever, it is not a question about philosophical positioning, rather in private I am often genuinely surprised that I might be positioned as socially 'entitled' to this 'award' and I do not seem to recognise myself or my origins in the spaces that the PhD and the academic seem to inhabit. I grapple with the internal paradox that this presents for me; whilst on the one hand I am politically motivated to deconstruct the Ph.D. as a text that mediates social practices that function to situate different kinds of readers and writers as inside or outside the academy, at the same time I indulge in a guilty, private pleasure where I tentatively imagine my Ph.D., as the "ticket" (Rhedding-Jones: 1997) to a new and special club. My sister and I are the first generation of our family to go to University and I think of my Mum and Dad and know that we would all like to 'dress up' for a graduation ceremony and record for posterity another milestone in the educational progress of our family. It is this paradox, the uncomfortable clash between a politics of social justice and the personal benefits and cosiness that the receiving end of elitism assures that I think Street (1999) imagines when he 'dares' teachers to work against the grain. A truly critical literacy may well signal the end of a difference that affords the sweetness of feeling on the inside. Ironically the sweetness may be ever the more desirable for those of us only just learning its taste and perhaps therefore the disappointment

of its (I maintain) necessary loss ever the more disappointing.

At times 'I' do not recognise the various 'I's that perform this piece, I re-encounter them when I edit, re-write, revise. Some 'I's are older, I began writing in 1999, some are much more recent, some still in process. From here I read each performance, actors with different scripts, different venues, different spaces. Some I enjoy, some I want to run from, and often I am disappointed. I 'read' my identity shifting, as I invite you to do, in flux. At times it feels beyond me to weave the odd fragments 'together', I resist deleting and re-writing, erasing that which feels uncomfortable, but a thesis is always already a kind of palimpsest, written over and through, satisfying the 'I' that dominates the moment of 'the end', binding enforcing a pretence at closure, harmony, linearity where perhaps there is none. My act of resistance here is not an act of 'truth' or 'authenticity' but an acknowledgement that there can only be difference, difficulty, plurality, that the PhD thesis is only a journey through choices. It is though a challenge for me to let the 'I's alone, to give licence to them sitting alongside one another - only 'I' am familiar with their historiography and perhaps it is only me that reads them slightly at odds, not quite sitting comfortably.

A new house; a different city; the embrace of parenthood; four changes of job; the sudden death of my partners' father;

years stand between me and the earliest 'I', writing back in 1999. I remember 'I' in 1999, without nostalgia, but protectively, a cooler, more detached self to whom the PhD as 'ticket' (Rhedding-Jones, 1997) mattered differently. Through a shift into the new (for me) identities of motherhood, and the different and additional responsibilities I experience and encounter as the mother of a daughter², I feel I have become intellectually 'feminised'. As such the 'making' or 'birthing' (Rhedding-Jones: 1997) of this thesis, the shape and texture and difference of this project has become more 'emotively' important to me as the 'I' at this time of writing. My sense that I have undergone a process of 'feminisation' sounds strange, almost alien to me, a woman grounded academically, as I feel I have been, in feminist literary theory and Women's history (my first degree is in English Literature and my Master's degree is in Women's History). Yet for me the roles and responsibilities of motherhood represent a 'moment' of struggle to work the space between competing discourses about what and how my identity might be. My previous identities, single, childless, worker, melded unproblematically with my self-expectations and those of people around me. Easy co-habitees they left me 'free' to inhabit them unselfconsciously and to some degree, I

² 'The terms we use to describe the mother-daughter relationship are inextricably linked to a psychological framework: *bonding, symbiosis, separation, differentiation, autonomy*. But the mother-daughter relationship needs to be described, understood, and analyzed in fully social and historical terms. The ways we understand and talk about mothers and daughters are structured by our own unconscious acceptance of certain concepts and paradigms that are not innocent but are, in fact, often destructive to the possibility of mother-daughter intimacy and continuity. The themes we take to represent psychological truths about the relationship need to be seriously and rigorously questioned; they need to be deconstructed to uncover and reveal the ideological agendas inscribed within many commonsense understandings of this relationship' (Walters, 1996:31)

read retrospectively, uncritically. However the tensions I 'feel' between what it means to be a good worker and what it means to be a good mother have forced, for me, a new kind of reflexivity about the fragility and instability of what 'I' call 'my' identity and what it means to be 'me', a worker and a mother (contested site?) in this time and place. For the first time I feel, rather than encounter in the abstract, Spender's (1985) ideas about the politics of naming and have come to understand better the distinction, which I now also realise I hadn't really grasped as an undergraduate and (old) Labour activist, between arriving at feminism through 'books' and arriving at feminism through experience - I am looking back at the 'Women against pit closure' movement I marched for with new eyes.

One 'critical friend' has remarked that in some ways it is possible to see my struggles with writing this thesis as the material expression of my newly felt 'feminisation'; the 'other', on the 'outside' looking in.

This feels both frightening and exciting; Frightening as I 'feel' 'myself' situated within and by the structuration (Giddens: 1991), the structuring structures (Bourdieu in Grenfell and James: 1998), through which power, naming, is exercised and exerted; excited as the 'opening' of 'other' is glimpsed as a space through which to make new meanings about the dual performance of mother and worker:

We do not know yet what women can do... (Elan, 1992: 26).

This has been my first real encounter with the limits of possibility: before motherhood I found it easy to be all the young women I felt I wanted to be and felt powerful in exercising power, now I am less certain, even 'lost' at times as my different identities, before and after motherhood, talk to and about each other through the 'bits of writing' that come together within the forum of this thesis. It is not always easy to manage a space for myself within the competing discursivities of my various identities: mother, women, worker, partner and 'to be' in ways 'I have not been'. 'Feminisation' has been for me the process of becoming consciously, and not always self-definingly, 'other' to my earlier selves, I feel (am?) at once powerful and powerless. Foucault expresses the complexity of what I think of as power schizophrenia:

power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything , but because it comes from everywhere....Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society (Foucault 1998:93 cited in Gauntlett, 2002:118).

At work I feel powerful, I am now Associate Dean in a University School of Education, and enjoy the capital, social and cultural, that this position affords. At work I feel competent and in control and confident to make complex decisions that impact on the working lives of others. As a mother, and more particularly a mother who works (working mother?), I am more tentative and anxious, vulnerable to the criticisms and observations of others. There

is more that 'can' be said in the sense that there is more that is 'sayable' in Foucault's sense about me as a mother who also works outside the home, as is suggested above 'working mother' sits differently alongside the more straightforward 'worker' or the notably absent, lesser spoken 'working father', the meaning of which I am uncertain - what kind of semantic site is this latter one? Certainly for my male partner and our peers 'working', 'academic' and 'father' are all signifiers that apply but without contest or cause for consternation.

I am struggling to imagine, at present, a new discursive 'space' amid these voices in which to claim for myself a less uncomfortably fractured subject position. It is the fabric of this space that this thesis works to contribute towards; how does a feminist poetics look within the domain of educational research? What may it be like? What are the conditions of its possibility? What does it mean to write as 'other' within this space?

...in choosing to problematise this figure of the individual, partly by using the term 'subject' or 'subjectivity'. Foucaultians seek to to explain how this emerging psychological invention came to be seen as the 'site' where sexuality, and so on, take place, and how it becomes an object of 'technologies of the self'. (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 53)

Both the lived experience and the intellectual journey of undertaking this research bring me to Judith Butler's invitation to work 'gender trouble'. Although Butler's ideas are explored in more depth below it is fitting to evoke them in this personal note as the project of 'gender trouble' has

become as central to my personal politics and ways of 'being' as it has to my to academic and professional ways of knowing, indeed gender trouble has become a means of interweaving the two. Butler's ideas grow out of the queer theory contestation (post-structuralist, also to be explored below) that:

- Nothing within identity is fixed
- Your identity is little more than a pile of (social and cultural) things which you have previously expressed, or which have been said about you
- There is not really an 'inner self'. We come to believe we have one through the repetition of discourses about it
- Gender, like other aspects of identity, is a performance (though not necessarily a consciously chosen one). Again, this is reinforced through repetition
- Therefore, people can change
- The binary divide between masculinity and femininity is a social construct build on the binary divide between men and women – which is also a social construction

(Based on Gauntlett, 2002)

and her incitement to gender trouble, the unsettling of fixed accounts of gender through the taking up and setting alongside each other of multiple, competing and possibly contradictory gendered identities, seems to me to pose the possibility of asking the kinds of questions about identity within which I find myself entangled. For me gender trouble is the 'digging deeply' that Foucault (2000) sees as a condition of possibility for the articulation of new desires:

We have to dig deeply to show how things have been historically contingent, for such and such reason intelligible, but not necessary. We must make the intelligible appear against a background of emptiness and deny its necessity. We must think that what exists is far from filling

all possible spaces. To make a truly unavoidable challenge of the question. What can be played? (2000: 139-140)

For me 'gender trouble', and its central idea of identity in flux has become a motif for a wider, post-structuralist project of unsettling and destabilising. For me this is also, and fundamentally, a feminist project in the 'Irigarayan' sense in that it disturbs the insulation between the 'present' and its absent 'other' enabling an altogether more multiple and duplicitous 'reality' that writes a feminine presence, a 'culture of difference'. To this end Irigaray beckons:

Don't restrict yourself to describing, reproducing, and repeating what exists, but know how to invent or imagine what hasn't yet taken place. (Irigaray, 1993:49)

Throughout this thesis I find myself returning over and over to notions of 'otherness' and the impulse of 'othering' as I reflect on authoring (the thesis) and being authored; through and within curricula and institutions. Perhaps it would be more accurate, although also more whimsical, to suggest that this is in fact a thesis about othering, taking and making the position of other and as such an exploration of positioning at a moment of slippage and possibility.

With this in mind then, I start not at 'the beginning' but with a series of beginnings written at different times by the selves that, gathered to comprise this 'author', (see also

discussion beginning page 101) have variously imagined, I hope you are sitting comfortably...let the performance begin.

Scene 1

Managing achievement in an FE context

I began this project in response to my role as GCSE English co-ordinator at a small sixth form and community college in the West Midlands. A typical student on the course would be aged 16 – 19 and would have already gained a D or an E grade in English and would be looking to improve to a C grade. Students with F or G grades were enrolled on to Wordpower courses. Typical enrolments for GCSE English averaged 140 students per year, a figure that represented a significant proportion of the College's average total population of 560. That such a high percentage of English students were following level 2 English programmes is best understood in terms of the College's geographical location within Sandwell. Sandwell LEA is consistently identified as low achieving by government league tables in both Primary and Secondary provision.³ The report of the 1999 FEFC inspection of the College comments:

The College draws principally from the Boroughs of Sandwell and Dudley in both of which there are low post-sixteen participation rates and modest rates of achievement for school pupils in general certificate of secondary education. The College enrolls many students from socially deprived areas in the immediate vicinity. The Further Education Funding Council has identified the College as one of a group that typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. (FEFC, 1999:6)

³ Sandwell LEA Stats – Source DFEE

Primary

	Test	Teacher Assessed
LEA	53.6%	55.4%
England	64.1%	64.2%

Secondary

	5+ A-C	5+ A-G	No Passes	Ave Point
LEA	29.7	84.0	8.8	30.1
England	47.9	88.5	6.0	38.1

My particular objective as a course co-ordinator was to provide a new context within which students could successfully meet the requirements for KS4 as detailed in the programmes of study in the English National Curriculum. My intention was to establish a whole team approach to raising achievement underpinned by research led best practice initiatives.

My initial survey of existing research on raising achievement in literacy found that much significant research has been done which has enabled teachers and parents to achieve a better understanding of how best to promote, and raise achievement in and enjoyment of reading in primary, secondary and home contexts. However there seemed to be little research literature dedicated specifically to sixteen to nineteen year olds studying within traditional FE environments. The larger scale reading habits surveys, for example Whitehead (1977) and more recently Hall and Coles (1994, 1999), have focused on younger students and the recent policy spotlight that the Skills for Life strategy (DfES, 2001) has cast on adult literacy has equally left sixteen to nineteen year olds in the shadow-lands. This group of readers seem to sit at the margins of reading research in the UK.

Policy priorities for sixteen to nineteen year olds studying in England and Wales were enshrined in the 1999 white paper 'Qualifying for Success' (DfES 1999) with its emphasis on qualifications in academic and vocational 'disciplines'. There is no 'literacy' as such in Curriculum 2000 rather there is 'communication' – compare with the national literacy initiatives that are now compulsory elements of school education (see QCA National Curriculum document for English, 2003) and adult basic education (see Basic Skills Agency Adult Literacy Curriculum, 2001) - and it might be that this simple difference in nomenclature in combination with the tight disciplinary focus that is characteristic of post-sixteen education, which has served to deflect the kinds of debates about literacy education in the sixteen to nineteen year old sector that are raging around its sister phases. Thus whilst the key current discussions about literacy in secondary and adult education are important and

relevant to those working to raise achievement in the sixteen to nineteen sector, there is no comparative scale of enquiry, action, exploration, experimentation or reflection specific to this sector for teachers to engage with, leaving them to extrapolate and eavesdrop, to listen at the margins of other people's conversations.

The project was a response to that gap and the overwhelming sense from the FE teachers I worked amidst that the majority of our students, from A level through to word-power, either weren't reading outside the classroom, or weren't engaging with the kinds of texts that it was felt might support or enhance their 'in College' experience.

These concerns and anxieties are articulated in a cross college questionnaire survey I undertook during the design stage of the research project to ensure validity, colleagues commented:

John: many A level student do not read. Some have limited vocabulary and weak understanding of grammar. At A level limited reading means that students do not have the cultural capital to enable them to do well at A level.

Pete: Many A level students have poor reading skills and weak vocabulary...very few undertake additional reading other than for coursework. Very few read a decent paper and only a minority seem to read novels.

And echoed in the comments made by student teachers at the college at a later stage in the project⁴:

Carole: *"(what do you expect of your students as readers?)* Of my GCSE students not very much. I remember going into that class and they said they don't read, they just don't read. I actually had this really weird experience the first few weeks of teaching I actually felt like I realised that they didn't think I could hear them when they were chatting and I was really thinking about this and I'd say come on, come on pay attention but I thought that they were actually treating me like I was some kind of visual thing the TV or something...and I think it because

⁴ This data was collected as part of a separate project I undertook at the college at the same time; see Kendall (2002c) and Avis, Bathmaker, Kendall (2002).

they're so used to this...TV kind of passive, you don't interact there's no dialogue you just watch this thing move around and when you're not interested you chat to a friend...I think the whole kind of being really passive, computer games, TV kind of culture I think it's really tangible in those lower ability groups

William: I expect them to read but I've no real belief that they will, they might read consumer magazines like Empire and Total Film but they won't read anything beyond that.

Sue: I did a questionnaire [for a teacher training module] about what reading material they used and how they engaged with the reading materials on the course. Their answers, well the sensible ones, to what reading materials they read out of college, was adverts and magazines occasionally so they haven't engaged with any texts. Why haven't they? Why have they got to 16, 17, 18, 19 without having engaged with books?

The project aimed to address these local concerns directly and to offer the beginnings of a research based resource for teachers working in FE contexts in other regions.

Scene 2

Steve's poem

These new times are characterised by the rise of multinational companies that increasingly seem to wrest control of nations away from governments. At the same time, economic production in the developed world is shifting from high volume to low volume to high value outputs, and workers are expected to be multi-skilled and trainable...schools have a significant role to play in embracing and critiquing New Times, rather than trying to domesticate them or keep them at bay.(Knobel, 2001: 104)

I find myself engaged in this research as a response to my experience/s as an English teacher working in a post-compulsory setting. Here I document a particular encounter, typical of many others, that brought me here. The experience of working with Steve, discussed below, resonates with the experience of others I have encountered in the literature, for example Knobel (2001) cited above and Kazemak (1999) whose ideas are discussed in detail later in this thesis (see page 276).

Steve's poem

In part I began this project in response to students like Steve. Steve was a 16 year old student enrolled on a level 1 Access to Further Education programme. In addition to this programme he took GCSE English which is where I met him. Steve had gained an E grade in English at school the previous summer – English was the only department in the College that permitted students with E grades to progress directly on to the level 2 GCSE programme hence the rest of Steve's programme was at level 1. In his self-assessment⁵ at the outset of his programme Steve had stated that he was not

⁵ I had introduced a reading policy, unrelated to reading in and for English, for level one students and was attempting to establish some form of 'base-line' from which to judge their progress. This was not a single 'test' but a profile approach which included the NFER literacy diagnostic assessment, a more conventional reading test and a qualitative self-assessment/evaluation questionnaire. Steve's self-evaluation is included in appendix 8

very confident about his reading skills (see appendix 8). In class he lacked confidence in his academic abilities and he was often reluctant to share ideas publicly. Characteristically he covered his work whilst writing and was anxious that all teacher feedback, including praise, was given very privately and if possible in written form.

Yet there were times when I glimpsed a more confident, self-assured version of Steve although this side to his personality rarely seemed to be expressed in what I might now call the officially validated practices of our classroom. Of course there were and are spaces in English for all kinds of work that lie outside the parameters of assessment but however well intentioned the practitioner it is difficult to deny that these informal, formatively assessed activities carry the same kinds of currency that summatively assessed 'coursework' related activities do. On one occasion Steve returned to the classroom shortly after the end of our English lesson with a short piece of untitled creative writing. As the other students had left the room, I read it aloud and commented that I felt it to be a thoughtful and detailed observation of a tree changing with the seasons. Steve seemed a bit disappointed with this assessment and added 'Yes Miss, but it could also be about life.' I was taken aback by this response and disappointed, as indeed I have so often been in my professional career, by the sound of my own 'professional voice' speaking a language that seemed to stem and stultify the possibility of his deeper creativity. I encouraged Steve to write up the poem as an additional piece to add 'flavour' to his coursework folder but he was reluctant and it never appeared.

At other times Steve spoke enthusiastically and articulately about Rugby, his passion, joining the police force, his ambition, and cutting chips for two hours every morning before College, his part-time job. But these kinds of moments could 'legitimately' only comprise a very small percentage of his Speaking and Listening grade and were often undermined by the need to assess technical aspects of structure, style and dialect and appropriacy rather than social or communicative aspects of Steve's contributions. As many English teachers do I often felt I was straddling the tensions between being true to the

requirements of the subject specifications' assessment framework and being true to Steve, it is not always easy, or desirable even, to capture the speaking and listening that occurs at the margins of the lesson, in the social spaces in which the learner feels more confident and is thus more competent. As the year progressed and the students were developing their personal reading logs⁶ Steve became an important source of books for other students interested in wrestling and rugby and Steve even began to trade access to the most desirable book, the autobiography of Prince Naseem, for a one pound fee.

The point of all this is that Steve, and many students like him who are constructed as 'low-achievers', made me more starkly aware of the inadequacies of the post-sixteen English classroom as a space for acknowledging and validating students wider reading/writing/communication practices – what Street calls 'literacy practices' (Street 1997: 48). Equally the versions of English promoted by KS4 and KS5 'specifications' - what is to be read, what should be read and by whom and to what ends as will be discussed in the next chapter - locates students in relation to texts in very 'specific' ways – 'specifying'⁷ that classrooms are spaces that prepare students for summative, terminal assessment of 'specified' outcomes. Within such spaces specification achievement criteria become the high status references points for defining, labelling and procession students' literacies and in turn, and sadly for most teachers, the means by which alternative out of school literacy – I use the term 'literacy' here to describe the range of 'skills' i.e. reading and writing, speaking and listening - practices are de-legitimised, obscured and denied.

⁶ We had introduced a reading policy that allowed half an hour's independent, free-choice reading every day – with progress logged and monitored and discussed with the teacher.

⁷ 'The language we use in research should be used with suspicion – Grenfell and James, 1998: 158

Scene 3

Origin: my startling point as a short story of moral panic?

...Foucault argues in *The Order of Things*, what matters is not a history of ideas in which various individuals discover, invent or imagine new ways of thinking; such events have to be accounted for within an already existing discourse: 'what is important, what makes it possible to articulate thought within itself, is its internal conditions of possibility' (Foucault 1970: 275). Such *internal* conditions of possibility refer the character, relations and distribution of discourse itself and not external conditions such as history, reason or progress. (Colebrook, 1997: 51)

This idea about the origin of my thesis emerged following my encounters with Foucault's ideas and is retrospective. I began to reflect upon the conditions of possibility of this project. Why, I began to ask, are young people's reading habits a legitimate focus for the professional question posing of teachers and why is this the kind knowledge that a UK University might want to invest in, this project was funded for its first two years by Birmingham University, at the turn of the 21st century?

Soler and Openshaw (2002) contend that the socio-political context of early 1990's England gave rise to an ideologically and politically specific 'crisis' about literacy 'standards'. They cite the 1990 Turner report⁸ as an important catalyst in focusing public debate. They then go on to draw an association between the development of debates in a media forum and concurrent developments in educational policy over the proceeding decade, arguing that 'media coverage and political rhetoric which surrounded the claim that literacy standards had dramatically fallen led to an acceptance of a need to return 'to

the basics' and the teaching of phonics to preserve 'literacy standards'. This enabled political consensus between Conservative and New Labour on the need to return to traditional and formalist based notions of education and literacy teaching' (Soler and Openshaw, 2002:17) leading to a new 'orthodoxy' of targets and testing. Barton (2000) takes newspaper articles as the 'data' for a historiography of public interest in literacy and tells a more complex story which emerges from the mid 60's and projects into at least 2010. What is especially interesting about Barton's argument is his contention that the 90's saw a:

shift...from grass-roots pressure group initiating concern over adult literacy to a government inspired moral panic. With this there has been a shift from liberal grass-roots purposes, philosophies, methods of teaching and assessment to a pedagogy which is centrally controlled and evaluated. The field of adult literacy along with the rest of education has been enlisted into a broader project of government and international organisations. (Barton 2000: 10)

Re-viewing the emergence of the germ of the idea for my project in 1998 within these kind of historical, political and social contexts offers the possibility of re-reading the origin of the project and raises important questions about its genealogy: In what terms were Black Country students being understood as under-achieving? Why was the achievement or underachievement of Black Country students as readers and writers an *important and legitimate* question at this time of asking? Why did *these* questions warrant interest from fellow professionals, educational managers and academics? How did these kind of questions come to compete successfully against other research questions to secure the financial investment from a 'higher status' university?

Although I have always understood myself to be driven by (and attracted to?) the project of social justice my encounter with the moral panic understandings of the history of literacy in the UK has prompted me to reflect upon the possibility of my apparently 'free' actions and choices being contingent upon the discursive orders within which I have operated. This has opened up new

⁸ Martin Turner published 'Sponsored reading failure' Warlington, Surrey: IPSET Education Unit in June 1990 arguing that test results for seven year olds in England and Wales had shown the biggest

possibilities for thinking through how I have arrived at this beginning. The founding drive for the project was closely tied to an achievement / underachievement binary and the endeavour to transform the latter into the former was of key was a key priority to me and my colleagues. This was endorsed by the University that was ready and willing to 'invest' in the proposed outcomes of my project.

I now wonder whether the story of the origins of my project might be more 'honestly' retold as the precipitant effect or manifestation of a discursive 'moment' at which a notion of 'literacy' is mobilised as a disciplining technology to define subjects in particular kinds of ways. Through this reading literacy education could be seen as a process by which the 'reading-subject' is defined, diagnosed, measured and assessed against a politically motivated blue-print and corrected, or encouraged to become self-correcting, where it is deemed to be 'underachieving'.

It is possible then, that the origins of this thesis are the 'literacy crises' (Soler and Openshaw, 2002) and 'moral panics about literacy' (Barton 2000) that, it is often argued, characterise the context of its inception. Such a reading offers a significant difficulty for me as someone committed to social justice: to what extent does my project mobilise, perpetuate, sustain or succour a discourse of moral panic? To what extent am I sharing in a concern for 'standards' and the deficit models of understanding students that they imply? To what extent have I accepted unquestioningly the implications of the achievement / underachievement binary? And how have I contributed to its being seen as a useful and appropriate way of making sense of student reading identities?

Scene 4

Needing a PhD

Whilst I would like that it were, this thesis acts not simply as an altruistic dedication to the furthering of knowledge and it is important to the project of 'reading against the grain', explored below, that I acknowledge this to be so. When I began this PhD in 1998 I was a lecturer in an FE college and this project was central to my resistance of managerialist answers to managing student performance, rather I wanted to align myself to research driven models rather than business driven models for informing practices in raising achievement. My involvement in research certainly enabled my career progression and in 2000 I joined a post-1992 University. The function and identity of the post-1992 'recruiting' University and the roles and identities that are in turn made available for staff in the context of the RAE and the *Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) remains issues of key importance for those of us labouring in this context. I have to some degree engaged with these debates through collaboratively work

Why a PhD will enrich your life as well as your career

Take this once in a lifetime opportunity to challenge yourself

Miles Brignall
Saturday April 6, 2002
The Guardian

Mention the three letters PhD to people outside the academic world and they immediately start talking in clichés. They describe scruffily dressed boffins desperately prolonging their time at college in a bid to stave off the inevitable entry into the job market.

How wrong they are. The vast majority of today's PhD students are highly focused, hard working men and women - who are clearly on a mission. After all, there are plenty of reasons not to do a PhD today - the financing of it alone is enough to put off all but the most committed. Even if you get sponsorship it is unlikely to be more than £10,000 a year, which doesn't exactly fund a champagne lifestyle or, more likely, a chance to start paying off undergraduate debts.

There's little doubt that doing a PhD represents a once in a lifetime opportunity to spend three (and sometimes four) years studying your subject in extraordinary detail. Unless you are set to go into serious academia (for which you will almost certainly need a PhD), such opportunities rarely present themselves in later life when other commitments - families, career, mortgage - tend to get in the way.

According to Dr Richard Greenwood, who runs a new four-year PhD at the Centre for Formulation Engineering at the University of Birmingham, it's not only an opportunity to work with world class experts in a specialist field, but also it can open the door to job opportunities which otherwise would remain closed.

"It's easy to assume that everything that can be discovered has been discovered - not a bit of it. The world is still full of unknowns - new species are discovered every day. Nothing beats the experience of discovering something no one else knows," he says. "A PhD is a chance to get deeply into an intellectual challenge in which you define the territory. It is a great experience to run your own project, and one that is now becoming highly valued in industry."

"While the budget may not be as large as you might find in industry (although in science and engineering it may run close), the challenges are the same - defining the problem, managing the resources (including people) and delivering effectively."

While your subject will obviously determine the sort of postgrad course you opt to take, it's worth noting that most of the money is in scientific study. While a PhD in history is no less valued by society, employers are not going to be knocking on your door after the course in the same way as if you did genetics or one of the bio sciences. In short, if you pick the right course, good PhD students are virtually guaranteed a job on the back of it.

A good example is the formulation engineering courses which Dr Richard Greenwood partly leads at Birmingham. Many former students go straight into industry. Recent doctoral students include John Robertson and Matthias Stein, who both joined with degrees in chemical engineering. John's thesis was on novel methods of pharmaceutical production. On completion, he was grabbed by GlaxoSmithKline - he now leads a large programme in a related area.

Matthias Stein used a new imaging technique (positron emission particle tracking) to study the movement of particles within processing equipment, and now runs a development programme on drinks production for Unilever based in Sri Lanka. "The course can almost be regarded as a three-year job interview or a way of establishing yourself with a certain company," he says.

If you are wondering what the prospects are for non-scientific PhDs, fear not. According to Martin Gallagher, director of recruitment consultant ECI Postgrad (www.phdjobs.com), students with PhDs in a variety of subjects are in demand with various employers.

"A postgraduate qualification will not only demonstrate the technical ability to fulfil the role but also show the candidate is a dedicated, self-disciplined, well organised and determined individual."

"That person will come with a proven track record of producing innovative research in their field, which is invaluable to a company's growth and success in an ever increasing number of sectors such as finance," he says.

His company places PhD holders in areas as diverse as investment banking, telecoms, defence and even law. "Within the derivatives departments of investment banks they have teams of mathematicians and physicists who develop highly complex mathematical models to help price and predict the movements of the derivatives markets. Mathematicians and

undertaken with colleagues already established within the sector (see Avis et al, 2002a and 2002b, 2003, 2004). Within this frame completing a PhD and establishing a body of work around this has an important relationship with career development and one's mobility within the wider higher education sector: in short achieving a PhD, at this time (of my career and in this time politically) is an important career move.

Notwithstanding this the letters PhD and the title 'Dr' function as important cultural codes, affording both social and cultural capital and within and without the institutional setting. This capital 'gain' is probably as important for those who have provided the conditions of possibility, my parents particularly, as it is for me.

physicists need to be of PhD standard in order to have the skills to be able to do the job," he says.

Despite the extra three years of study, a recent survey by the Association of Graduate Recruiters shows that the average postgraduate starting pay is only slightly higher than a graduate with a first degree. But PhDs do gain in the medium to long term due to enhanced promotion prospects.

While choosing the right course obviously does pay dividends, get on to the wrong one and it could harm your prospects, says Birmingham University careers adviser Rod Oakland. He suggests PhDs in wrong research areas can take students further away from their career goals, or be no help.

"Some research topics and research fields are more in demand by employers than others. Ideally what the student ought to do is to contact the sort of company that might employ them afterwards and ask what research area they ought to be specialising in, or what the employer thinks of the research expertise they are about to gain," he says.

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Act 2

Shifting paradigms:
methodologies

Scene 1

A 'best practice' case study

(Aside)

The narrative that follows is the earliest conception of this project. It builds on, and emanates from, the proposal that I initially submitted when I applied to become for an Mphil/PhD studentship in 1998. The format of this piece follows the guidelines issued in the literature issued by the University to support students with writing their applications.

Justification of study area

Raising achievement in reading and writing, or literacy, has been an explicit priority of educational policy in England and Wales since at least 1996. In that year the National Literacy Project was established by the then Department for Education and Employment, DfEE (now the Department for Education and Skills, DfES), under a conservative government. The project aimed to:

raise standards of literacy in

Chorus

Re-assessing the scientific: a reflective account

When I began this project it seemed like a means to an ends. I had identified an educational issue; the underachievement of my students, and that there was little research evidence to support the design and implementation of strategies to address or tackle the problem. The project was intended to provide some kind of answers to the issues I'd identified in my practice, to facilitate a move toward a better practice. I discussed my proposed area of research with a member of the University of Birmingham staff and wrote a research outline in accordance with the recommendations of the University Research Student's Handbook (University of Birmingham: 1997). The research had a clear set of aims¹⁵ and the proposed methodology felt unproblematic, uncontroversial – a means to provide some sort of attempt at an answer - and these feelings were affirmed and validated

¹⁵ See page 38 - 39

line with national expectations for primary schools by improving the quality of teaching through more focused literacy instruction and effective classroom management and by improving the school's management of literacy through target-setting linked to systematic planning and monitoring and evaluation. (National Literacy trust, 2003: www.literacytrust.org.uk/Databases/Primary/3.html)

In the same year Shadow Secretary for education David Blunkett established a literacy 'task force', led by Michael Barber, with a remit to develop a five to ten year 'literacy strategy' for a then opposition party hoping to come into office the next year. The group published two reports in 1997, preliminary findings in February, entitled *A Reading Revolution - how we can help every child to read well?* (Barber et al, 1997), and a final report in September, *The Implementation of the National Literacy Strategy* (DfES, 1997). These two documents outlined a blueprint for school based literacy education in England. A 'literacy hour' was introduced to the daily routine of primary classrooms in September 1998 and in the same year

when I was awarded a studentship to fund the work. My various and collective readings of encounters with the University, with colleagues, with the School of Education's 1997 Post-graduate research handbook, with the instructions for students applying for studentships led me to feel that educational research was a set of technical processes that were mechanical in articulation and scientific in nature and which would yield answers to the problems I had identified. Emotively I felt disengaged from the project, it felt like a professional endeavour, academically and intellectually remote from my groundings in English Literature and Women's History. In fact I felt rather deflated after I had written the proposal as my feelings and ideas about the object of my interest felt as though they had been de-intellectualised by the process of mapping and mechanising, of translating, my ideas and professional self into application forms and proposals. However the ideas now also felt 'orderly', administrated, atomised and as such, manageable and my colleagues and managers back at work were interested and supportive of the

developmental work at key stage 3 began and Sir Claus Moser, Chair of the Basic Skills Agency, was commissioned to report on the basic skills problems, including literacy, perceived to proliferate among adults in England. In March 2001 *Skills for life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills* (DfES, 2001) was launched and by September of that same year all secondary schools were expected to introduce a new literacy strategy at key stage 3. In the same year curricula for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL, were published.

Policies driving developments in literacy education at curriculum and institutional level were complemented by directives hoping to precipitate a 'cultural shift' around attitudes and approaches to reading and the academic year 1998-1999 was designated a 'National Year of Reading'. The National Year of Reading (NYofR) represented a discursive cultural spine against which curriculum developments could be supported, the task force outlined this rationale in 1997:

we are convinced that for our strategy to succeed, it is

project; it was felt that the findings would be useful to us all in our everyday classroom practice – indeed the College offered to fund the project beyond the promised funding of the University.

However as I became more immersed in the process of research I began to feel increasingly ill at ease with the process I had instigated.

As discussed above the questionnaire format was intended to mirror earlier macro studies but with a new focus on sixteen to nineteen year olds. My questionnaire went through many drafts and exhaustive piloting and critiquing by professional colleagues, my supervisor and representatives from the sample population. I was keen to anticipate and thereby limit the impact of design flaws on the quality and thereby 'validity' of the data but retrospective reflection lends a different interpretation. With hindsight I feel that my insecurity about my work stemmed less from my sense that I had to prove and demonstrate my rigour as a researcher but rather with the essential nature of the tool itself and

necessary for the whole society to assist teachers and parents in their respective tasks. If there were a national sense of everyone, both inside and outside education, working together to raise literacy standards it would help to transform expectations and to ensure that primary teachers felt that they were part of a wider movement with broad support. While we believe that some of the criticism of primary schools' performance over the last generation has been legitimate - as the picture we have painted of the current state of affairs makes clear - we also recognise that very often primary teachers currently feel they are swimming against a cultural tide which threatens to overwhelm them and their best efforts. We recognise that the teaching profession will be in no position to take on the challenge we have set if it is totally demoralised and that our strategy must provide teachers with the encouragement and support to take on the challenge ahead. For these reasons, in addition to changes we have recommended in the education service, in this section we make proposals designed to turn the cultural tide so that teachers and schools feel they are swimming with it. The National Year of Reading originally proposed by David Blunkett in his speech to the 1996 NAHT conference - is central to our plans for achieving this objective. (Barber et al, 1997: paragraphs 136 – 137)

The purpose of the NYofR was to support the strategy in schools by

the values and beliefs from which it originated.

I discussed my anxieties at length with my supervisor and we initially concluded that the questionnaire was simply a means, albeit imperfect, of getting information in a manageable form from a large group – the important factor was how that information was presented and that the limitations of the data collection tool were acknowledged, critiqued and discussed. In essence the most important factor in terms of my rigor, as a researcher was the extent to which I had worked to refine and collaborate on the tool so as to minimise its limitations. I backgrounded my misgivings and continued to work to ensure the validity and reliability of my work and thereby its transferability in future discussions about the reading of 16 – 19 year olds.

I took the same 'textbook' approach to constructing my attitude test but I continued to feel ambiguous about the process I was involved in. My observation of the students encountering the attitude test raised a

“involving the whole of society in a wide-ranging campaign to encourage more reading, and create a culture that promotes reading” (Barber, 2001:3). Eighty six community based projects were funded through the initiative⁹. The spirit of this campaign has been preserved in subsequent years by initiatives such as the National Reading Campaign ‘Read On’ which aims to:

...build on the momentum created by the National Year of Reading through its information and networking role for reading practitioners, alongside a series of national promotions targeted at different audiences. (National Literacy Trust 2003: www.literacytrust.org.uk/index.html)

and is resonant in the BBC’s ‘Big Read’ a project launched in April 2003, inviting the nation to vote for its ‘best-loved novel’.

Within the discussions and aspirations articulated through these various documents and projects reading and writing have tended to be conceived as distinguishable, separable practices sometimes understood through

number of issues that finally demanded re-assessment of my methodology, methods and research questions, and fundamental re-evaluation of the terms and definitions that I was working with. Here I offer an account of the second stage¹⁶ of the construction of the attitude test during which students from the target population were asked to respond to the 40 statements generated by the focus group.

When administering the attitude test pilot I observed the sample group completing the test. The group comprised 40 A level students at the end of their first year of study. They had been asked to work individually, but this was not an exam and they were not being assessed in any, for them, consequential sense. Rather they had agreed to participate as a ‘kindness’ to me and it was therefore difficult, despite my request to enforce or maintain an individual focus. Many of the students seemed more inclined to work on the activity collaboratively, preferring to read and respond out loud, others offered individual,

⁹ Details of these projects can be found at the National Literacy Trust website at <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/index.html>

¹⁶ See above for full details of each stage

different developmental frameworks and requiring differing pedagogical response. This is reflected in the desirable learning outcomes designated for each education phase where separate assessments are required of reading and writing and descriptors for attainment are clearly segregated.

With these developments have come benchmarks and targets which teachers, institutions, local and regional authorities must work with and towards. Performance at all these levels is subject to the surveillance of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). Cast as integral to the technologies of raising literacy standards teachers at the frontline, across educational phases, have been drawn to the research literature around literacy and achievement in literacy as they strive to meet the newly imposed targets. And indeed the requirement to link practice and research, particularly through 'action research, more explicitly is increasingly an expectation of teachers.

The vast research literature around literacy is generally organised around

rhetorical commentaries in accompaniment. Far from 'exam type conditions' the room was abuzz with chatter and discussion. I Initially felt dismayed at my lack of control over the process. What, I thought, would a 'proper' researcher do now? How can I prevent the students 'contaminating' their 'natural' and 'honest' responses? But at the same time, as an English teacher I found it interesting to listen to the students sharing, revising, editing, comparing and debating their thoughts about attitudes to reading. Wasn't this process resonant of the kinds of critical pedagogues I attempted to enact in the classroom every day? Suddenly how they felt about reading seemed infinitely more complex and fascinating than the survey could ever begin to represent. There were 'whys' and 'wherefores' to their 'ticking' and their responses seemed to depend significantly on where they read, how they read, what they read for and who they read with and to. Reading as a process was not, for these students at least, a single-thread experience to which they had straightforward responses. For me it suddenly became alarming that these discussions and deliberations would

age or phase so that clear strands around early years, primary, secondary and adult life are evident. Within each phase 'domain' divides the literature again creating foci around 'family literacy', literacy in and out of school and around regional localities. Within the field of adult literacy the notion of domain provides a spectrum of specific localities including the workplace (Mace, 1992; Frank and Hamilton, 1993; Castleton, 1999;), prisons (Knights, 1991; Wilson, 2000; Herrington and Joseph, 2000), voluntary organisations, libraries and communities (Hamilton and Barton, 1998) more generally. Through the literature reading and writing tend to be identified as discrete areas of focus and this tendency resonates through curricula structures and the naming of professional organisations and forums, for example the United Kingdom Reading Association¹⁰ and The Writing Development in Higher Education Initiative¹¹.

The tradition of research around

be rendered invisible by my attitude test – could this really be what I wanted from the research? Could I accept this of the research process? What political and power relations were at play and how was I situated, and implicated?

Although I feel inclined to try any attempt to re-construct the texture of the stories students told that day would be no more than a memory game. It hadn't occurred to me to tape-record the session because that was, after all, supposed to be the job of the research tool the students were helping me to construct. But it seemed unlikely that the Likert test would capture much of what I had observed, indeed it now seemed to be offering less than a snapshot, not even a short-hand for the activity the students had been engaged in. Furthermore it seemed strange that it was possible that I could ignore all that I had heard and still go on to achieve a set of 'valid' and 'reliable' results about their attitudes to reading. However

¹⁰ Although at the time of submission this has now changed to UKLA, United Kingdom Literacy Association

¹¹ The Writing Development in Higher Education initiative was launched in September 1994 by the University of Northumbria in response to widely expressed concerns about the standards of students' written communication skills. Conferences held at Middlesex, Luton, UW Aberystwyth, Reading and Liverpool, along with an active discussion network have brought together practitioners from a wide range of countries, institutions and interest areas to discuss the forms that writing development can take within Higher Education.

school-aged children's literacy practices and preferences is especially well established and as Early Years education has become a central strategic strand of government policy¹² the focus of research work has extended to incorporate pre-school literacy. Much significant work, from National surveys through to small scale ethnographic studies has been undertaken to ascertain what children read (see for example Whitehead's 1977 national reading survey repeated by Coles' 1995), what motivates reading and writing (Wade, 1998), rhythms and patterns of reading over time (see also Whitehead as above) and reading habits by age group and gender (see also Coles, 1995). The pedagogies of teaching reading and writing share an equally rich tradition in which 'attitude' to reading and writing forms a central strand (see for example McKenna & Moore, 1998).

A much smaller, although equally broadly focused, literature is dedicated to the literacy lives of adults (see for example writers such as Mace 1992, Rice 1999, Hamilton & Barton 1998 and useful journals such as *Journal of Adult and Adolescent literacy* and the

within the terms of the research paradigm I was operating with this would be not only possible but reasonable and academically justifiable: I had followed the test construction guidelines carefully and the students had in turn successfully completed the exercise by ticking, albeit noisily, their boxes.

However many of the surveys were returned with codicils pencilled in the margin. Many participants, although they did tick a box, clearly felt that to simply agree or disagree was an oversimplification of their responses to the list of statements and returns were littered with additions like "sometimes", "depends", "what kind of book?", "what kind of reading" (see appendix 5) additions that suggested respondents were keen to modify, clarify or qualify their tick box responses. As a 'researcher' I felt like I had failed as I remembered Yin's stern warnings about reliability:

the objective...is to ensure that, if a later investigator followed exactly the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again,

RaPAL bulletin) and research capacity in the area of adult literacy is set to increase under the sponsorship of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), established in 2003.

Although the literature base as a whole is wide and varied very little of the existing work relates explicitly or specifically to the sixteen to nineteen year old age group studying in traditional further education (FE) contexts, and little has been written about the literacy habits and preferences of this group of students, particularly where they are studying outside the environs of the school context in colleges of further education (including sixth form colleges) rather than school sixth forms. This age group fall beyond the boundaries of compulsory schooling and short of 'adult education'. Students in adult education programmes are generally understood as over 18 and returning to learning after a gap in their education rather than those who are continuing study directly from school (see for example the terms of reference of the Skills for Life strategy, DfES, 2003). Thus teachers working to support and

the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions...the goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study. (1984: 40)

But as teacher my interest was aroused – my students were refusing to take on the identities the test made available to them. They were, rather, reading dynamically and working to re-negotiate textual meaning on their own terms, reading against the grain in ways that would be valued and nurtured in my English classroom. These responses, theirs, and mine provoked a theoretical re-examination of the set of meanings I had internalised as I had assumed the role and identity of 'educational researcher' quite separately from my role and identity as the kind of teacher of English I defined myself as.

In the next section I attempt to theorise around these feelings of ambiguity and in so doing to re-think my own understandings of method and methodology, what it means to 'do' educational research, and the implications for an exploration of students' attitudes to reading.

develop students as readers and writers in this phase must infer and extrapolate from findings in secondary and adult literacy to inform their practice.

The absence in the research literature, identified above, has particular ramifications for further education teachers working in regions, like the Black Country, that are noted to be under-achieving against national benchmarks. In areas like this the concern of post-compulsory education for sixteen to nineteen year olds is as much about a 'second chance' at or 'catching up' with the key stage four qualifications (for example GCSE) that students have failed to acquire at school as it is about providing progression routes to vocational competency or higher education programmes. Teachers working to support reading and writing in these regions, in this sector, arguably need a distinct research base from which to develop and drive forward a meaningful agenda for raising achievement in literacy. This project is specifically concerned with 'feeding' this gap in the research literature and aims to contribute to a discussion about how teachers might be more

A reflexive account: theorising reflection

Not a clean, clinical well-illuminated mirror but a dark mirror, a cracked mirror, a looking glass through we may enter into...what? A mirror that is distant, or cloudy, a mirror that reflects other worlds, or that does not reflect but refracts...or diffracts...As I write I am aware of the hyperbole, the rhetorical devices set up to persuade you, the reader, of the worth of my argument...or maybe this is just a good story...(Kemp, 2001:349)

In the early stages of the narrative above my concerns for my work centre on the need to secure 'truth', 'honesty', and 'reliability' and avoid 'contamination' and 'inaccuracy'. The students participating in my data gathering exercises are conceived as sources of the former, whilst the environments within which they interact forebode the latter. Within this set of

effective in supporting the literacy learning of sixteen to nineteen year olds.

Methodology

This project will draw on case study methodology where a case study is defined as:

a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon. While the techniques used in the investigation may be varied, and may include both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the distinguishing feature of a case study is the belief that human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits. As a consequence of this belief, case study researchers hold that to understand a case, to explain why things happen as they do, and to generalise or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerge. (Sturman 1994:61 in Bassey 1999; 26)

Yin's identification of the purpose of a case study is drawn upon to make the connection between the function of the case study and the methods of data collection utilised:

A case study is an empirical enquiry that:

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when

understandings the job of the researcher is to exercise environmental control so as to enable the safe delivery of data from the site of production, the students' consciousness, to the moment of its articulation, the research tool. Embedded in these constructions are a number of more than 'common sense' assumptions about students as subjects and identities, about the nature and qualities of language, about the process of making sense through reading and writing, about the relationship between research and researched, and about the impact of context, politics and culture on all of these.

Students as data source: subjects, identity and postmodernity

What to do? How to act? Who to be? There are the focal questions for everyone living in the circumstances of late modernity – and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through

- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- Multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984:23)

Case study locality

The locality for this case study is the Black Country in the West Midlands region of England. The Black Country covers a geographical area to the West of Birmingham, stretching from Wolverhampton in the North West down to Halesowen in the South West. The region is culturally bound in that it has no definitive geographical borders and local debate continues to negotiate the fall and extent of its boundaries. Four Local Educational Authorities have administrative governance for the Black Country region: Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton.

The decision to base the research within the Black Country was based on two factors: the researcher was employed at a Further Education college in Sandwell and as such had privileged access to research subjects and institutions; and the specific need, identified in Further Education Funding

day to day social behaviour. (Giddens, 1991: 70)

The notion of the research subject speaking a 'truth' fundamental to 'themselves', in the deterministic and fundamental sense rather than a 'truth' valid for and of the moment is dependent upon a highly partial appeal to a Liberal Humanist (Weedon 1986, Ryan 2001) view of self and identity. It is only within liberal humanistic terms that 'identity' is seen to exist as a unified 'truth', "a singular logic of presence" (Rhedding, 200:1), that might be freely examined through a medium such as a questionnaire or a Likert scale template, this 'common-sense' of 'self' is problematised by the vocabularies of 'late modernity' and 'post-modernity'. Through the kaleidoscope of the latter 'self' is understood rather as an unfinished, dynamic game of story telling about identity rather than a fixed point from which 'truth'

Council (FEFC) reports (responsibilities for these inspections now rest with Ofsted as indicated above), to address issues of underachievement in literacy throughout the Black Country region.

Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s the FEFC consistently identified the region as characterised by social and economic disadvantage:

The FEFC has identified the college [Dudley] as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Unemployment is low [in Dudley itself] but relatively high in areas close to the college and there is a problem of long-term unemployment. Minority ethnic groups account for 4.5% of Dudley residents. (FEFC, 1988: 2)

Of employment opportunities in Sandwell, 35% are in manufacturing industry, and mainly provided in small companies. Local employment provision during the next five years is forecast to expand by 1.5% compared with 10% nationwide. The local unemployment rate is over 11% compared with 7.8% nationally. Unemployment levels among people from ethnic minorities are high, especially in Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups where the rate for both groups is 38%. Long term unemployment is also high: 28% of unemployed people have been out of work for over one year and 45% have been unemployed for over two years. (FEFC, 1999: 2)

about an 'individual' may take reference. Giddens argues that:

self-identity...is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. It is a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography. Self-identity has continuity - that is, it cannot easily be completely changed at will - but that continuity is only a product of the person's reflexive beliefs about their own biography. (Giddens 1991:53)

And that self-identity is therefore "bound up with capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (ibid. 54). Foucault goes further, arguing a more 'surface', 'exteriorised' view of 'self', Kendall and Wickham explain:

in choosing to problematise this figure of the individual, partly by using the term 'subject' or 'subjectivity...Foucaultians seek to explain how this emerging psychological invention came to be seen as the 'site' where sexuality, and so on, take place, and how it becomes an

More recent reports from Ofsted

continue to echo these summations:

The metropolitan borough of Walsall is a diverse urban area, including areas of intense deprivation. Forty-five percent of the population live in wards that are in the ten percent most deprived in England. Walsall ranks as the 31st most deprived local authority area [in England] (Ofsted, April 2002: paragraph 14)

Sandwell's population has been falling over the last 20 years and now stands at 288,400. The relative level of deprivation in the authority has worsened. Sandwell is the most deprived borough in the West Midlands and there are no areas of affluence within its borders. (Ofsted, July 2002: paragraph 11)

Assessments of literacy levels within the Black Country have been pessimistic and achievement in schools and colleges within the region is identified as being below national benchmarks. For example Ofsted reported of Sandwell Local Education Authority (LEA) in 2002,

...at key stage 1 the proportion of pupils achieving level 2 and above was below the average for statistical neighbours and well below the national average in reading and writing...the proportion of pupils achieving level 4 in

object of 'technologies of the self' (1999: 53)

'Self' here is a locus at which social transformations are effected and around which an illusion of essentiality is constructed in order to achieve a particular sociological effect. Where ethics are understood to be the "sets of standards to do with being a particular sort of person" (Foucault, 2000: 264) technologies of the self:

might as well...[be understood] as the (internal and external) practice of our (internal) ethics... the technologies of self are how we think and act to achieve this. Such acts though, are not done for show, to give an impression to an audience; they may be practised for the individual's own sake. (Foucault, 2000: 266)

For Foucault the construction of 'self' is a "truth game" (2000: 224) that human beings play out to understand, indeed be 'themselves'. Throughout this performance of self 'subjects' are

the National Curriculum (NC) tests at key stage 2 in English (66%) was well below the national average and below the average for statistical neighbours...[and]...at key stage 3, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above in NC tests was well below the national average in English...The performance of Sandwell schools in the examination tables published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is modest. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 2001 was 34%, against a national average of 48% and the lowest proportion in the West Midlands (Ofsted, July 2002: paragraphs 16 -19)

The Ofsted portrait of Walsall LEA is comparable:

...attainment on entry to primary schools is significantly below that found nationally...standards are in line with similar LEAs at key stage 1...but below at key stage 2 and in English at key stage 3...at key stages 2 and 3, the rate of improvement has been above the national trend for mathematics and science and broadly in line for English. However in 2001, the results in English dipped at both key stages and at key stage 3, the rate of improvement has fallen behind, with 2001 results leaving the LEA well below the national average. (Ofsted, April 2002: paragraph 20)

In this locality, where levels of school underachievement, in literacy and English in particular, are noted by inspecting bodies as a cause for

active, but not sovereign agents in the process of production, they are:

the punctuation of discourse, and provide the bodies on and through which discourse may act. In line with this we may say that subjects form some of the conditions for knowledge (Kendall and Wickham 1999: 53)

so that:

rather than think of the 'individual' in different sites, we can think of different subject positions taken up in discourse, positions that can be and are contradictory and irrational. For a Foucaultian account of the subject, attention must be drawn to the ways in which power relations differentially position subjects in discourse, even when (perhaps especially when) this produces 'contradictory subjectivity. (Kendall and Wickham 1999: 54)

Discourse is the ideas and beliefs through which 'the material', or non-discursive, is understood. Taken to the extreme it is not possible to understand non-discursive outside the discursive, the

concern FE providers have a pivotal role to play in delivering key stage 4 or 'school-level' qualifications. Further Education has often been described as a 'second chance' for learners who have underachieved at school, here in the Black Country, where first attempt failure is so significant, that tag is ever more pertinent and further education can be seen to provide an important second attempt at the National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 2 qualifications¹³ that 16 year olds are intended to achieve at the end of key stage 4. Ensuring that the literacy education on offer for sixteen to nineteen year olds in Black Country FE colleges is effective must be a central priority for those with responsibility for curriculum and policy within the region and this project aims to provide a resource that might inform judgements and practice.

However the size and diversity of FE provision for sixteen to nineteen year olds in the region mean that the study will also have implications that are nationally significant and it is perceived that findings will have relatability to regional development

material is always under the sovereignty of discourse.

Kendall and Wickham (1999: 43) identify five movements through which discourse and the operation of discourse might be recognised, chartered and analysed:

1. Recognition that discourse is a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular systematic
2. Identification of the rules of production of statements and invite examination of the rules governing the production of different statements
3. Identification of the rules that delimit the sayable
4. Identification of the rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made
5. Identification of the rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

This process serves to demonstrate that discourses

¹³ Qualifications such as General Certificate in Education (GCSE) and intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ)

elsewhere, as Bassey writes:

The relatability of a case study is more important than its generalisability... [if case studies] are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research. (1981: 85-86)

Aims and Objectives of the project

Aim 1: To identify the voluntary reading choices of students in post-sixteen education based on the studies of younger readers undertaken by Coles (1995) and Whitehead(1977). Objectives by which achievement of aim will be measured:

- Construction of quantitative questionnaire to identify the range of reading students are engaged in
- Administration of questionnaire to identified sample of students across the region
- Management and analysis of data using SPSS to ascertain
 - the range of reading students are engaged in
 - the contexts within which reading takes place
 - the frequency with which students engage with different types of reading
 - the relationship between range, frequency and achievement of qualifications in English Language and Literature
 - the factors students' suggest

are not "reflections of the pure forms of objects, but rather the result of temporary discursive luminosity; they allow a thing to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer" (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 40) and therefore subject identity is already shifting and in flux, "precarious, contradictory and in process" (Weedon, 1997:32):

What...[the subject] can know and how it knows is always influenced by its temporality and its participation in a community of meanings - in other words, by its history and culture. It can neither be an origin nor a destination but is always 'underway'. (Usher and Edwards 2000:35)

In these terms a research technique that isolates a participant in order to reach something of the 'individual self' may lay no reasonable claim to either validity or reliability. For Foucault and others what a subject 'knows' is always, and can only be, drawn from a community of

influence their reading choices

- the range of leisure activities students are engaged in other than reading
- whether students consider reading to be a leisure activity
- differences in reading habits by gender and ethnicity

Aim 2: To explore students' attitudes to reading based on McKenna's (1990) exploration of younger readers.

Objectives by which achievement of aim will be measured: -

- to construct a Likert scale test to assess attitudes to reading
- to analyse test results
- to draw conclusions about test results

Aim 3: to explore student attitudes to learning to read

Objectives by which achievement of aim will be measured: -

- To collect qualitative data about students' experiences of learning to read
- To compare and contrast experiences according to gender, ethnicity and educational achievement.

Research design

The research design is as a blueprint of the research...the research design is much more than a workplan. The main purpose of the design is to help avoid the situation in which the evidence does not address the initial research questions. In this sense, a research design deals with a logical problem and not a logistical problem. (Yin 1984:29)

meanings

refer the discourse not to the thought, to the mind or to the subject which might have given rise to it, but to the practical field in which it is deployed' (Foucault 1973 cited in Ryan 2001: 77) .

And in these terms the notion of 'isolating' a respondent to access 'non-communal' truth equates to moving outside the discursive and therefore to attempt to think and say that which is neither thinkable or sayable.

In these terms it is not just the value of this particular Likert test but the very values (discourses) of 'testing' and 'sampling' that it draws upon that are problematised: the 'exam conditions' model can be seen to draw upon a set of discursive relations within which students as subjects are both positioned and work to position themselves in distinctive kinds of ways to better perform the *sayable* subject identities of the

Methods

This project intends to replicate the work that has been done at primary and secondary level. The reading survey is a qualitative study that draws on the work of Coles and Whitehead.

It is intended to use a mixed or 'eclectic' methodology that draws on both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. It is felt that the use a quantitative research tools will enable valid, reliable statistical conclusions to be drawn about the total target population - sixteen to nineteen year olds following English Language and Literature courses across the Black Country – whilst quantitative strategies will enable a detailed analysis of individuals within the sample.

There is a significant body of research that explores primary and secondary school pupils' attitudes to reading and it has been convincingly argued by McKenna, Wade & Moore and others that pupils attitudes to reading impact significantly upon their achievement in reading - pupils with negative attitudes to reading demonstrate lower levels of attainment in literacy and reading tests. Wade and Moore offer a useful

specific domain of practice. The examination is a space in which subjects work to author an identity 'text' that corresponds (or not) to the 'valorised' or 'authorised' ways of being articulated through the various discursive technologies of education, for example 'assessment criteria'. It is a scenario in which they are scrutinised for the degree to which they adhere to and fulfil expectation.

This notion of text as mediator of social relations is a key principle of the set of ideas that are often grouped under the New Literacy Studies (NLS) (see for example Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Barton, 1994; Gee, 1991; Street, 1984).

Writers associating themselves with this viewpoint:

treat language and literacy as social practices rather than technical skills to be learned in formal education. The research [of these writers]

summary of the existing literature:

Cumulative interaction between low self-esteem and poor performance is well documented (e.g Burns, 1982; West et al., 1980) and can cripple those readers who daily experience frustration and disappointment. In order to become an effective reader Lutrario (1990) suggests that willingness and positive attitudes are important; while Moon and Rabin (1980) argue that these same qualities influence motivation, perseverance and progress. Others go even further by insisting that positive attitudes are not merely helpful to but, are essential prerequisites to progress. (Wade & Moore, 1998)

However most work of this kind is confined to studies of younger children, and English teachers working in post-compulsory settings have to infer and extrapolate from these findings to inform their practice – hence the ‘need’ for the research. This gap in literacy research is perhaps especially poignant for teachers working in areas where considerable numbers of students are ‘catching up’ to achieve GCSE pass grades in English (Sandwell). This project aimed to contribute something to the beginnings of a robust, evidence based discussion about the realities of sixteen to nineteen year olds as

requires language and literacy to be studied as they occur naturally in social life, taking account of the context and their different meanings for different cultural groups. (Street, 2001: 17)

This social practice view of literacy argues that texts and the construction of texts index to social relations. Thus literacy practices are “historically situated...[and] are patterned by social institutions and power relationships” Barton and Hamilton 1998: 7). Fawns and Ivanic (2001) draw on the grammar of a social practice view to argue that particular literacy events, that is the sets of interactions which produce text, require respondents to represent ‘themselves’ in particular kinds of ways. Taking form-filling as an example they argue that:

the questions constrain what we recall about our ‘self’; we then compare these already limited details of our lives to the items presented on paper, seeing whether they match and producing

readers and the future of post-sixteen literacy education. My agenda mirrored in many ways the work of those working in the primary and secondary stages and it seemed appropriate therefore to attempt some form of replication. Many researchers have used a simple Likert scale test as a key stage in determining attitudes to reading. – see references to Wade & Moore and McKenna above – so I incorporated this methodological approach into my own study. This was initially suggested and supported by both my supervisor who had been involved in some of the primary studies.

Methods for Information Collection

Information about the target population will be drawn through the following:

- Anonymous questionnaires to whole sample to collect quantitative information about range, contexts and frequency of reading.
- Likert scale attitude tests to assess attitudes to reading
- Student self-reporting – students who have previously been interviewed will be asked

a 'form self': a regimented version of who we are, made official and concrete by being committed to paper. However...this 'form' self is usually an inadequate depiction of a person's true sense of their 'true self', showing how our identity changes according to situation and according to the socially constructed identities which are made available to us. (Fawns and Ivanic 2001: 90)

Within this set of understandings the Likert test as literacy event can be seen to require the writing subject to understand, interpret and re-present their experience within a pre-shaped, fixed range of alternatives to "design...a paper character" (ibid: 91) of themselves. Completing a Likert test 'accurately', like filling in a form 'correctly', i.e. working with and within the required parameters, can be seen as 'recognition' and 'realisation' (Bernstein 2002) of the rules of a particular literacy game and demands taking particular subject positions.

to record, independently and privately, their recollections of learning to read and their perceptions of themselves as readers.

Sample size

The sample size for the questionnaire is five hundred. It is difficult to ascertain the percentage of the total population that this represents as there is no data available that brings the group together. It was considered therefore most appropriate to set the sample size at a figure that would yield statistically significant data. It is felt that a sample of this size is both administratively manageable within the timeframe of the project whilst also being large enough to ensure the statistical significance of findings. The latter is especially important in qualifying the reliability of any data produced and thereby in securing both the suggestibility of findings to the wider Black Country context and relatability to other regional contexts. The sample size for the attitude test has been determined as 10% of questionnaire group, fifty students, and the qualitative analysis 10% of this group, five students.

In Fawns and Ivanic's terms then a traditionally legitimate response to a Likert-scale test i.e. completing it without 'error' in the technicist sense, is merely to allow "ourselves to be dominated by the discourse" and legitimise "the social attitudes and practices...it...sustain[s]" (Fawns and Ivanic 2001: 91). Thus viewed through a lens that combines post-modern understandings of self and subjectivity and a NLS conception of literacy as social event the only claim to validity that it is possible to make for a Likert scale test is a self-referential one: that it may be a successful measure of a users' competence in participating in the Likert scale as literacy event.

Applied more broadly to my project, these theoretical notions have prompted a revaluation of the 'incidentals' noted during my literature review, and even

Constructing the tools : -

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was intended to realise a quantitative understanding of students non-directed reading habits, more specifically: what they read; how often they read; how long they read for; where they read; when they read; the range of material they selected; the purpose and function of their reading; the agents they felt influenced their reading choices and a self-evaluation of reader confidence. It was intended that information from the wider cohort might then be analysed by gender, ethnicity, bi-lingualism and socio-economic grouping.

The sample population was sixteen to nineteen year olds following English/Literacy programmes across seven Black Country Further Education (funded by the Learning and Skills sector and formerly by the Further Education Funding council) Colleges. The sample was specified in this way because the researcher was working from a subject specialist perspective and was particularly interested therefore in findings that

turned in on the literature review itself. During my reading I noted an emergent theme of over-reporting reading and associations with reading although this was never discretely treated and tended to be noted only as incidental to the research being reported. A 1951 investigation by Parry and Crossly indicated a tendency for library card ownership to be over stated by the general public, a 1996 survey of U.S college students (Gallick 1996) found that although most students reported that they would read more if they had more time, their actual consumption didn't increase after extended holiday periods. And a DfES Best Practice Research Scholarship (BPRS) project (Iannerilli, 2001) found a significant difference between the ways students and teachers reported student reading behaviour. This further problematises the reliability and validity of the Likert test not because it suggests respondents are 'unreliable

would enable new ways of working within the subject area.

The first draft of the survey comprised twenty two questions drawn up by the researcher. These were then audited using Fowler's (1998: 365 cited in Cresswell, 1999) six principles for effective question design¹⁴ and a second draft was produced. To ensure validity, that the questions being posed were relevant and important to practitioners working within the subject discipline, this draft then went through a process of consultation. This process had two functions identified by Fowler to "help to examine the assumptions about the reality which people will be asked" (1998: 366) and to help to "evaluate the assumptions about vocabulary, the way people understand terms or concepts that will be used in the survey" (ibid). The first stage of consultation involved five specialist colleagues and included written feedback from three English teaching colleagues and a college librarian and a formal verbal discussion with a Head of English. Four of these colleagues worked within the Black Country and one in a neighbouring region – the decision to include the colleague in the latter

witnesses' but because it suggests at the discursive nature of allying oneself to particular kinds of reading identities. Clearly the participants in all three research projects perceive value and worth in associating themselves with consuming books irrespective of their actual reading practices. In Foucault's terms this tendency demonstrates the ways in which the material, in this case books (as artefact), 'exists' within a distinct set of discursive relations. Clearly the sort of person who reads books is discursively constructed as more attractive than the sort of person who doesn't read books, thus the technologies of self work to position subjects according to this 'ethic' (of being a particular kind of person – see above), which in turn plays out a particular set of discursive relations. Thus whilst in this case the self

category was to assess validity beyond the immediate priorities of the region. As a result of this feedback a third draft was produced. This draft went to the next stage of consultation a focus group meeting comprising four English teachers, postal consultation with two further Heads of English and a focus group discussion with a group of fifteen students representative of the sample population. At this last meeting an additional two questions around magazine reading were added to the questionnaire as students felt that this important aspect of their reading had been left under-explored and at the request of a number of students the method of recording responses was altered from circling word preferences to ticking boxes. A fourth draft was produced (see appendix 1) in light of these discussions and this was field tested with a group of students studying at GCSE level, a further post-pilot draft was field-tested with an Advanced level group (see appendix 2) and a final draft emerged (see appendix 3).

The field test identified that it was necessary to write a clear set of introductory instructions that guided respondents to consider only non-

might be seen to have sovereignty over positioning 'it' is subject to the possibilities on offer. If talking about reading raises 'ethical', in Foucault's sense, implications then it is difficult to argue that the results of any survey about reading might lay claim to a 'truth' about the reading practices that respondents are engaged in or the attitudes they have to reading as clearly there are other, identity related, issues at stake for those respondents. Rather these tests and surveys serve only to prompt the mobilisation of the technology of self.

I mention above 'my literature review', the idea of a literature review was introduced very early in our research training. We were encouraged to think about how to 'search' for literature, how to record and reflect upon our findings, how to take a critical approach to the work we read and how to ensure that we referenced and

directed reading and to ensure that all nil responses were recorded as such.

The researcher intended to administer all the questionnaires personally to ensure that the conditions under which the surveys were completed were similar in each event. It was intended that surveys would be completed between January and July 2000 but the complexity of communications between the researcher, the senior managers through whom permission to work in colleges had to be sought, and classroom teachers resulted in a much slower process and the period of collection extended to the end of the following academic year 2000-2001. Six of the seven colleges approached participated in the study and in total 338 (67%) surveys were completed. Due to constraints of time and availability it became impossible for the researcher to personally oversee the completion of all surveys. Therefore a script was written and field-tested to enable delegated staff to administer the surveys and ensure a degree of parity of experience. To ensure confidentiality to respondents surveys were sent out to colleges in pre-packed batches and students were instructed to seal completed surveys in

sourced work and ideas appropriately. What we were not taught was how the 'discourse' of the literature review operates. That is to say the ways in which a literature review is seen to 'authorise' the arguments and ideas which it contextualises and to which it plays 'host'. The literature review is used as mechanism for imparting 'authority' and 'validity' and its partiality is always unspoken and un-explored in that it functions not to describe the 'real' or truth of 'the field' but rather to "police, produce, and constitute a field" (Lather 1999: 5).

This process of constituting the field describes equally the analytical framework for a Likert style test.

Responses falling within the designated fields, the ticks in the boxes, are selected and 'counted' and responses falling outside the fields the annotations at the perimeters are deselected. I draw significant parallels

envelopes provided by the researcher.

Attitude Test

Leonard (1998) outlines five stages of constructing a Likert scale test:

1. gathering a pool of items
2. deciding on a response categorization system
3. asking a number of respondents who are representative of the sample population to respond to the statements
4. obtain a total score for each respondent
5. select items for final scale using item analysis.

To gather a pool of items, the first stage, a focus group of six English teachers was brought together at one of the Colleges participating in the study. Together group members had many years of experience working with teaching and developing reading skills, this in part ensured that the list of statements represented more than the partiality of the researcher. The group idea-stormed a list of forty statements (see appendix 4), twenty that were perceived to be positive and twenty

here with Hartley's critique of the assessment process. Codicils and additions or what Hartley might call the respondents' 'examination of the examination' of them (1997:113), are de-selected and the responses are reduced to a set of 'results' - 'n% of such and such a category of students demonstrated negative or positive attitudes to reading' - that might then be available for interpretation by the researcher. Respondents are reduced to 'the researched' the researcher elevated to 'interpreter' perhaps seen to speak *of and for*. In this case my respondents' rejection of the 'positioning effects' (Fawns and Ivanic 2001: 91) of my 'test', their determination **not** to be obedient' (ibid. 92) but rather to assert that the range of responses on offer did not apply to them, would go unspoken. It might be argued that whilst made justifiable and credible through an inter/textual tradition, empirical results

negative. The statements were then listed in an A4 test format which invited participants to choose one of five fixed alternative expressions for each statement ranging from strongly disagree, through undecided to strongly agree (see appendix 5). The decision to choose five response categories was based on an awareness that this would afford a greater range of choice about how to analyse the data, enabling for example positive and negative groups to be collapsed to form three rather than five groups overall to enable more reliable analysis. This test was then given to a group of forty sixteen to nineteen year olds. In order to ensure parity of experience I administered the survey to all respondents in the same room at the same time, fifteen minutes were provided to complete and return the test. Respondents were urged to answer honestly and independently.

All students successfully completed and returned the questionnaire and their responses were entered onto a spreadsheet. Twenty statements were selected to comprise the final test. It was intended that fifty students, 10% of the questionnaire sample, at two centres would take the test.

of this kind simply play out a 'ritual of rigour' (Hartley, 1997: 110) tending to obscure or deny the nature of their construction: an onion-like layering of partial and illusory truths. Hartley's vision of an alternative assessment process seems to raise a number of issues that are highly relevant to this kind of critique of Likert scale style testing:

an assessment process informed by postmodernist theory would not set aside data which fell beyond the pre-specified categorisation; it would not, alternatively, try to force them into these categories in the interests of conceptual neatness and convenience. Rather, it would celebrate the abnormal; it would not discard it, or rework it, so that it 'becomes' normal. It would regard the examination questions as texts unto themselves, arranged in a certain form. These examination papers may themselves attract a superimposed text, written in the hand of the candidate, but not part of the formal answer script – an examination of the examination,

Semi-structured, focus groups

Findings of the survey and attitude test were to be taken to focus groups in one college for more detailed discussion.

self-reported reading histories

The final stage of the project, the self-reported reading histories were to include 10% of the attitude test sample, so five students in total.

unofficial, a silent off the record discourse constructed by the candidate, unexamined, yet meaningful in the margin....and it would recognise that this endeavour can never achieve objectivity and universality; it is situated, political and local – a little assessment narrative, for the moment, whose outcome can never be anything more than a socially constructed representation, partial and provisional.’
(Hartley, 1997: 113)

I recognise in this description of the implied other a scientific paradigm in which my Likert scale is granted legitimacy.

Hartley’s criticisms resonate in Richardson’s analysis of traditional notions of the practice of writing social science research:

The referencing system in social science, for example, discourages the use of footnotes, a place for secondary arguments, novel conjectures and related ideas. Knowledge is constituted as ‘focused’, ‘problem’ (hypothesis) centred’,

'linear',
straightforward. Other
thoughts are extraneous.
(Ibid. 927)

The version of writing, 'the static writing model' (ibid. 924), identified here is implicit and unquestioned in my original research design. Richardson locates this model within a viridicular truth discourse; 'given to science [in the 19th century] was the belief that its words were objective, precise, unambiguous, noncontextual, and nonmetaphoric' (ibid. 924/5). Within this model writing is not only conceived but practised in very particular ways 'I was taught, however, as you were too, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, until my points were organised and outlined (ibid. 924). She goes on to argue:

No surprise that this static writing model coheres with mechanistic scientism and quantitative research. I will argue that the static writing model is itself a socio-historical

invention that reifies the static world imagined by our 19th -century foreparents... The model has serious problems: it ignores the role of writing as a dynamic, creative process; it undermines the confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research is inconsistent with this writing model; and it contributes to the flotilla of qualitative writing that is simply not interesting to read because adherence to the model requires writers to silence their own voices and to view themselves as contaminants. Social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a sociohistorical construction, and, therefore, mutable... (ibid. 924)

The notion of analysing and writing up findings outlined in my first story conceives a particular model of making and taking meaning through reading and writing in which a written text is understood to be an efficient vehicle for transporting rigorous and objective meaning from author to messenger in an unproblematic way. This would

seem to ignore completely the important challenges and problematisations offered by a post-structuralist account of language, reading and meaning making.

This given there seemed in my original research design an inherent contradiction between the object of my research - 'reading practices and understandings of the process of making meaning' - and the proposed manner of its representation.

There is little or no analytical or reflexive engagement with writing, reading and language in the kind of 'scientific research' that I was engaged in and certainly no places or spaces within which to intellectually engage with Richardson's dynamic vision of writing as method of enquiry, "I write because I want to find out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it" (ibid. 924).

The point at which I began 'writing up' the first 'instalment' of my research proved to be a particularly pivotal point in the theoretical orientation and practical shaping of the project, as this was the point at which my earlier encounters with literary and linguistic theory seemed to talk most pertinently and persuasively to and about the process I was now engaged in. My inscription of the research process, was a third person narrative, authoritative, omnipotent, dislocated from time and place and 'unproblematically' conspiring in the illusion of objectivity that I had at that time, rather ironically, been working with my A level Literature students to deconstruct. To assume such a position seemed vastly at odds with the post-structuralist approach to 'subject English' (see Peim, 1995 for a discussion of these ideas) that informed my classroom practice. An approach informed by

understandings of meaning as
 "cultural and learned,
 but...also unfixed, sliding and
 plural...in consequence a
 matter for political
 debate...[whereby] culture
 itself is the limit of our
 knowledge: there is no
 available truth outside
 culture." (Belsey and Moore
 1989:10) and in which "the
 literal description of events
 [observation followed by
 description] is not possible,
 any more than description can
 exist in a one-to-one
 referential relationship to
 that which it purports to
 describe. Rather a
 description is a 'gloss', a
 typification of the presumed
 meaning of such
 events.' (Stanley 1993:214).
 Such understandings conceive
 a 'crisis of representation'
 (Beach 2001) in which
 'writing about' is
 necessarily and inevitably a
 complex, arbitrary,
 subjective, and partial,
 practice that works not to
 describe the 'real' but
 rather to "police, produce,
 and constitute a field"

(Lather 1999: 5) in these terms writing about research is "not representing the world but writing it" (Usher, 1997:33) and researchers are, like literary writers, "world-makers" (ibid. p35).

As I began to interweave the strands of my academic autobiography I remembered anew the politically important 'spaces' that post-structuralist and feminist critics had envisioned amid the 'chaos' as:

language no longer guarantees identity, or meaning: all figuration is chaotic, disorganised and non-transparent out of the chaos resulting from the collapse of master-narratives a new space is produced. This space is of particular interest to feminism, not least because of its feminine connotations; it is the space of the unknown and of the 'master-narratives' own 'non-knowledge', what has eluded them, what has engulfed them, a 'space' over which the narrative has lost control." (Belsey and Moore 1989: 20)

and the crisis of representation that this poses for writers, particularly writers wanting

to identify themselves with feminism/s. I re-posed Liz Stanley's question:

"If we want to produce accountable feminist knowledge, then, we need to take account of the issues involved in 'description'. How do we describe the social world and what preconceptions are built into this?" (Stanley, 1993: 215).

Stanley's important question is not easily answered, and her own responses (retrievable data, detailed specification of the analytic procedures involved, in depth discussion of the interpretative acts that produce findings and conclusions - see Stanley 1993: 216) fail to engage with the associations post-structuralist positions envisage between language, subjectivity, social organisations and power, that 'language does not 'reflect' social reality, but produces meaning, creates social reality' (Richardson 2001:928). Luce Irigaray argues that for women, absented from act/s of

naming, echoing Spender
 (1980) before her, language
 is a "symbolic cloister"
 (Whitford: 1991: 29), that is
 male in its construction and
 imposition and that a
 feminist 'poetics' must
 necessarily interrupt the
 structures and grammar
 asserted by that order to
 create female ways of
 knowing/saying:

"Mais quelle prison? Ou
 suis - je recluse? Je ne
 vois rien qui m'enferme.
 C'est dedans que je suis
 maintenue, en moi que jus
 suis prisonniere. Comment
 aller dehors? (Et l'une
 ne bouge sans l'autre)
 But what prison? Where am
 I cloistered? I see
 nothing confining me. The
 prison is within myself
 and it is I who am its
 captive. How to go
 outside?" (Irigaray cited
 in and translated by
 Whitford, 1991: 29)

Irigaray's position is,
 problematised by post-
 structuralist accounts which

dismantle the notion of a gender binary arguing that "the idea of 'discovering' a feminine aesthetic assumes that there is something like the feminine which exists independent of social and historical construction" (Colebrook, 1991: 35). In fact a feminine aesthetic may inscribe a totalising position which 'insufficiently categorize our experience' (Bing and Bergvall 2002: 495). Bing and Bergvall argue rather that gender is an aspect or tranche of the social and linguistic identities which a woman may situate herself within, or be situated by at any particular moment, thus:

the selves constructed are not simply (or even primarily) gendered selves: they are unemployed, Asian, American, lesbian, college-educated, post-menopausal selves in a variety of relations to other people. Language is never encountered without other symbol systems, and gender is always joined with real people's complex forms or participation in the

communities to which they belong (or have belonged or expect to belong). (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2002: 485)

This notion of women participating in diverse and complex communities of practice facilitates a more fluid, plural notion of the construction of social identity within which the terms of participation is always in progress. It seems relevant to enable a beginning understanding of an individual's stories of participation through reference to Lave and Wenger's (1999) understandings of an actor's 'participatory trajectories' in communities of practice within the context of vocational learning (1999:36), "there may well be no such thing as 'peripherality', there may well be no such simple thing as 'central participation'....changing locations are part of actors" learning trajectories, developing identities, and

forms of membership (ibid: 36) The notion that community might be organised around a stable and centred core is rejected, and participation can be seen as a heterogeneous activity subject to and shaped by an actors' situating within and being situated by orders of discourse. Thus the story of one's relationship with community is not easily told, in that it is not readily knowable, but rather mutable and polyphonic.

Davies speaks beyond the simple insufficiency of binary thinking encapsulate gender to an argument which understands binary thought as a metaphysical technology by which we come to *be gendered*:

Binary thought is revealed as metaphysical, that is not the result of observations of natural pairs which exist in the world, but as ways of seeing built around an unquestioned assumption of opposition and difference - an opposition and difference that is built into the language and thus the worlds constituted through that language (Davies, 1997:13).

Thus notions of community are referenced to and by binary discourse.

Unsure quite where to go next I re-visited the statements the members of the focus group had generated in the first stage of the survey construction. The discourse/s about reading and what it means to be a reader that the statements project/engage with perhaps begin to explain why the respondents to the attitude test were reluctant to offer straightforward responses. Such a test fails to understand reading as not only a process of meaning making but also as an activity with a relationship to cultural capital, self-image and identity - hence perhaps the over-reporting noted by Gallick (1996) and Parry and Crossley (1950 cited in Cresswell, 1999). An alternative discourse presents reading as so much more than a technical skill to which one might have a simple, uncomplicated, single

attitude. Rather reading was understood by the focus group members not to be a technical process but an activity deeply rooted in socio-cultural practices, indeed to some degree the self-identify might be regulated and or defined in terms of a relationship to or with reading habits and practices - 'I like to be thought of as a keen reader'. It is perhaps this complex definition of what it means to read or not to read, to be or not to be a reader that caused the participants in my research to hesitate before responding.

My conclusions to all this are still in the 'scientific' sense rather untidy and perhaps it is important in the post-structuralist sense that they remain so, despite the vulnerability of such non-closure when seeking acceptance from a traditional research community. The process of my research has exposed a number of assumptions embedded in the

'best practice',
'practitioner' research
tradition around attitudes to
reading, and reflected in my
original research design,
that 'reading' is an
uncomplicated technical
process that one might have a
single and simple response
to. For me this problematises
any attempt to 'measure'
attitude to reading, as this
would be simply to re-
inscribe and re-affirm a
performative model of
reading.

What I am interested in now
is to explore the 'community
of meanings' about reading,
readers and texts within the
Black Country context, how
these reflect and relate to
dominant cultural/political
discourses and how identity
is constructed and regulated
in relation to these. This
will, I hope, open meaningful
and inclusive discussions
about institutional
understandings of Black
Country students as
underachieving readers.

|

A note on presentation: I had intended to run this next section in parallel with Scene 1 and Chorus above, however attempts at this made the text difficult to read, not in the 'disruptive' sense but in the impossible, impractical sense. For practical, rather than theoretical reasons therefore Scene 2 follows as a single column piece.

Scene 2

Shifting paradigms: re-thinking reading and readers in educational settings, mobilising alternative research methods

Clearing the ground: new questions

...without theoretical clarity the empirical investigation of literacy will only reproduce our own prejudices (Street 1995:25)

The language we use in research should be used with suspicion, or seen, itself, as a logical construction – e.g. parents, mothers, schools each is ‘representing...by avoiding the difficulties involved in rethinking definitions, boundaries and actual operations, research is rendered ‘quintessentially conservative’ and instrumental in maintaining the dominant orthodoxies or ‘legitimate’ versions of the objects of its study (Grenfell and James, 1998:161)

The experience of research, detailed thus far, has brought me to newly understand ‘reading’ and ‘reader’ (and writing and literacy) as signifiers that gesture permanently contested sites of meaning and henceforth these terms are to be put under ‘erasure’ (erasure will be discussed below) - reading and reader - to signal that what it means to ‘read’ or ‘be a reader’ should no longer be taken to be certain or predictable: “Reality is contested. For the social scientist not to recognise this is a supreme act of bad faith” (Bourdieu cited in Grenfell and James 1998: 176).

This new (for me undertaking this project at this time) uncertainty renders problematic the original questions (and the traditional research approaches employed, the surveys and attitude tests detailed and critiqued above) that this thesis sought to address and orientates towards new questions and methodologies. My analyses above contend that the only questions that might be posed with any validity, or indeed answered with any reliability, are questions that explore the meanings of reader and reading within a particular context. This moves me to a theoretical, or paradigmatic, position that might

broadly be described as 'feminist /post-structuralist and/or post-structuralist / feminist'.

Post-structuralism

My notion of post-structuralism draws on ideas that might, epistemologically speaking, 'derive' or 'emerge' from, writers like Derrida (1976) and Foucault (see for example 1985, 1986, 1991) but which in a post-structuralist understanding have been (re)framed by many others (for example Weedon (1986) Grenfell, & James (1998), Lather (1997,1999), Richardson (2001), Ryan (2001), Elan (1998), Usher (2000), Edwards (2001), Hartley (1997), Peim (1993), Kendall and Wickham (1999) Butler (1990) and Atkinson (2004). Whilst embracing this 'melting pot' of 'sources' I resist the accusation that I am engaging in a 'simple' "game of 'Academic Chinese Whispers'" (Tooley, 1998: 62) that serves to pervert the truth of the 'primary' or 'authentic' source. Rather I assert I am seeking to work homologously, in that I am working through and with a post-structuralist account of the reading project that accepts as *inevitable*, that which writers like Tooley strive to forestall, that through reading and re-reading the work of 'great thinkers', Tooley includes Derrida, Foucault and Bourdieu in this category, "arguments get distorted and misrepresented, and can bear very little resemblance to the original source" (Tooley 1998: 56) rather than one that ascribes the meaning of texts, as Tooley would have it, to their 'original' authors. The latter would be "a thoroughly un-post-structuralist procedure" (Peim, 1993: 3) that would ignore the central tenets of post-structuralist positionings. Rather post-structuralism prefers that "the identity and meaning of things shifts radically given different perspectives and cultural contexts...[post-structuralism is]...a multi-directional thing, a mobile theory of texts, language, the subject, subjectivity" (Peim, 1993:3), post-structuralism *is* like the language and ideas it speaks , "like all language, plural" (Weedon, 89:19). I choose to address Tooley's anxieties here for two reasons; firstly because Tooley offers a useful, working illustration of the 'common sense' of reading – making sense of text - which post-structuralism talks to, about, *and moves* beyond (any linearity implied here not though intended to be taken literally); secondly because in

addressing Tooley's conjecture I also address the kind of critique to which post-structuralist accounts are often subjected.

Notions of 'mobility', 'plurality' and the "free play" of the meaning (ibid.) of text, where 'text' is understood in the widest semiotic sense as a 'site' upon which 'meaning/s' are played (and contested) are central characteristics of post-structuralist ways of knowing. Fundamental to such understandings is Saussure's theory of the 'sign' (Saussure, 1974) in which language is theorised as an abstract system of 'signs'. Each sign comprises a signifier (phoneme or grapheme/sound or written image) and a signified (meaning) with these two aspects being related in a purely arbitrary way with "no natural connection between the sound image and the concept it identifies" (Weedon, 1987: 23):

The notion of value... shows us that it is a great mistake to consider a sign as nothing more than the combination of a certain sound and a certain concept. To think of a sign as nothing more would be to isolate it from the system to which it belongs. It would be to suppose that a start could be made with individual signs, and a system constructed by putting them together. On the contrary, the system as a united whole is the starting point, from which it becomes possible, by a process of analysis, to identify its constituent elements. (Saussure 1974: 113)

So that the:

meaning of signs is not intrinsic but relational. Each sign derives its meaning from its difference from all the other signs in the language chain. It is not anything intrinsic to the signifier 'whore', for example, that gives it its meaning, but rather its difference from other signifiers of womanhood such as 'virgin' and 'mother' (Weedon, ibid.).

However post-structuralism also builds upon, and departs from Saussure's ideas in some quite crucial ways. Where Saussure locates meaning in a fixed system of signifiers: post-structuralism contends that this signification must always occur within:

...a discursive context and the temporary fixing of meaning in a specific reading of a signifier depends on the discursive context. The meaning of the signifier 'woman' varies from ideal to victim to object of sexual desire, according to its context. Consequently it is always open to challenge and

redefinition with shifts in its discursive context. What it means at any particular moment depends on the discursive relations within which it is located. (Weedon, 1987: 25)

This critique of Saussure's model is signalled most clearly through Derrida's (1976) questioning of its 'logocentrism', that is the contention that "signs have an already fixed meaning recognised by the self-consciousness of the rational speaking subject" (Weedon, 1987: 25). Derrida argues rather that meaning is produced through the concept of *diffe'rance* in which:

meaning is produced through the dual strategies of difference and deferral. For Derrida there can be no fixed signifieds (concepts), and signifiers (sound or written images), which have identity only in their difference to each other are subject to an endless process of referral (ibid.).

Meaning is thus always already socially constructed, patterned by institutions and practices, and what a particular signifier means at:

any given moment depends upon the discursive relations within which it is located, and it is open to constant reinterpretation. Dominant liberal-humanism discourse relies on the philosophical notion of ideas as something outside ourselves, of difference as self-evident and transcendent, to be discovered through experience. Yet, Derrida shows the structure, coherence and stability of meaning and of knowledge to be a fiction, always open to challenge" (Ryan, 2001: 36).

Logocentrism, Derrida argues, construes a 'metaphysics of presence', that is the belief that words 'stand in for' a truth or reality that exists outside language which (mis)leads "to attempts to manipulate meaning that exists 'out there'" (ibid.). Derrida, seeks to represent the instability of the signified by 'crossing' the signifier or 'putting it under erasure'. Within the new framing of this project ~~reading~~ and ~~reader~~ are put under erasure to signal that these are contested terms, "the crossing through is a mark of questioning (a cross examination), which does not completely obliterate the original term. Rather the effect of "crossing" or "putting under erasure" is one which is meant to *radicalize* the term in question" (Elan, 1994: 11). Furthermore throughout this thesis inverted commas are used repeatedly to gesture a tentative, reflexive anxiety about

the common sense of language usage and the contradictions and paradox of using language to explore the outer limits of language.

It is subordination to this 'metaphysical illusion of presence' (ibid.) that provides the conditions of possibility for Tooley's use of 'Academic Chinese Whispers' as 'accusation' and his implicit assertion that the 'real' of theory is 'out there' and might somehow be 'known most clearly' through original or primary text. Foucault further argues that such structuralist or modernist understandings construct an ideological notion of 'an author', as an entity functioning to quell the fear of "the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault, 1991: 119) that post-structuralism mobilises. In this sense the 'author' in Tooley's narrative is a fictitious identity serving to:

...reduce the great peril, the great danger with which fiction [or research?] threatens our world...the author allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations...We are accustomed...to saying that the author is a genial creator of a work in which he deposits, with infinite wealth and generosity, an inexhaustible world of significations. We are used to thinking that the author is so different from all other men, and so transcendent with regard to all languages that, as soon as he speaks, meaning begins to proliferate, to proliferate indefinitely. (Foucault 1991: 118)

In fact, Foucault conjectures:

...the author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction. (Foucault, 1991: 119)

In a post-structuralist narrative then, Tooley might be likened to the resolute, unreflecting Gloucester in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, as he seems to stumble blindly towards the "groundless spanning of the abyss" (Elan, 1994: 25) in an endlessly futile search for the sureties of the totalizing theory of liberal-humanism where in fact "academic Chinese whispers" may be all that might be played.

This is not to suggest however that reading should “end in the (banal) reduction to pure individualism, a position likely to claim that reading, and all readings, are purely a matter of individual preferences or personal predictions” (Peim, 1993: 73). Rather that social reality has no meaning outside language and that the “range of subject positions it [language] offers always exists in historically specific discourses which inhere in social institutions and practices and can be organised analytically in discursive fields” (Weedon, 1983:35). For Foucault the discursive field is permeated by a host of conciliatory and competing discursive possibilities that offer a variety of ways of giving, taking and organising meaning. Far from opening up an endless range of individualised possibilities discourse, a corpus of ‘statements’ whose organisation is regular and systematic (Kendall and Wickham, 1999), is understood to assert the rules of the production of statements, to delimit the sayable and create spaces in which new statements can be made (ibid.):

Foucault is not claiming that a discourse is a set of true statements but rather that a discourse, in defining what can be said and thought, provides the means for statements to be assessed as true, the reasoning which enables truth-claims to be made and validated. He describes discourse as a *system of possibility* which makes a field of knowledge *possible*. By doing this, discourse ‘systematically form the object of which they speak...[they] are not about objects; they constitute them’ (Foucault 1974: 49). (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 90)

Foucault’s ideas gesture a landscape of the ‘real’ that might only be knowable through exploration and description of the discursive field. Furthermore what can be ‘known’ or ‘told’, through research or otherwise, is always already firmly embedded within a social and historical milieu. Foucauldian analysis effects an important shift for research: from ‘seeking truth’ to ‘unravelling truth games’, from ‘discovering the real’ to a description of how an ‘illusion’ of truth is played out. As Foucault argues of his exploration of the field of sexuality:

One must not suppose that there exists a certain sphere of sexuality that would be the legitimate concern of the free and disinterested scientific enquiry were it not the object of mechanisms of prohibition brought to bear by the economic or ideological requirements of power. If sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was only because

relations of power had established it as a possible object. (Foucault, 1990c: 98).

For Foucault research questions are re-orientated in the case of *The History of Sexuality*:

...the question we must address, then, is not: Given a specific state structure, how and why is it that power needs to establish a knowledge of sex? Neither is it the question: What over-all domination was served by the concern, evidenced since the eighteenth century, to produce true discourses on sex? Nor is it: What law presided over both the regularity of sexual behaviour and the conformity of what was said about it? It is rather: In a specific type of discourse on sex, in a specific form of extortion of truth, appearing historically in specific places...what were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourses, and conversely, how were these discourses used to support power relations? (Foucault, 1990c: 97)

So Foucault rejects the idea that research might function to 'uncover' realities and contends rather that research can only describe the discursive fields within which the illusory nature of 'the truth about an object' is represented as a 'truth narrative' at particular historical moments:

...to understand the history of madness we do not look for some original object, madness in itself to which all ideas of madness have ultimately aimed but rather we must look at madness as a term or concept reinvented at different periods for different ends' (Shumway, 1989: 7). Thus madness is not simply an object in the real world waiting to be discovered by empirical investigation but an object constituted by a modernist discourse of madness (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 90).

Thus the nature of things is seen to be constituted through discourse:

Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern. Neither the body nor thoughts and feelings have meaning outside their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations, often within institutional bases. (Weedon, 1983: 108)

In this way Foucault illustrates through his work on sexuality, psychiatry and the penal system (see Foucault 1990a, 1990b, 1990c) how discourses

construct new forms of person and how subjects are produced through discourse as the:

...punctuation of discourse, and provide the bodies on and through which discourse may act. In line with this we may say that subjects form some of the conditions for knowledge (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 53)

Rather than think of the 'individual' in different sites, we can think of different subject positions taken up in discourse, positions that can be and are contradictory and irrational. For a Foucauldian account of the subject, attention must be drawn to the ways in which power relations differentially position subjects in discourse, even when (perhaps especially when) this produces 'contradictory subjectivity' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999).

Central to Foucault's ideas then, as has been explored above, is a "theorisation of subjectivity that does not assume a unitary, static subject at its core but instead conceptualises subjectivity as multiple, dynamic and continuously produced in the course of social relations that are themselves changing and often contradictory" (Ryan, 2001:6).

Feminism / poststructuralism: as a woman writing educational research

: "Not 'how do they go together' but 'how are they beside each other?'" (Elan, 1994: 1)

...it would be fair to say that feminism necessarily upsets the way we think about politics because its activist political movement is inseparable from a critique of the history of representation. And its inseparable because of a notion of solidarity. Deconstruction upsets the way we think about philosophy because its analysis of the philosophical tradition is inseparable from an attention to the performative effects of the discourse of analysis itself... In short, then, these double displacements undo the map of intellectual and social space inherited from the Enlightenment, and this ... untying is of crucial contemporary relevance. (Elan, 1994: 2)

At the level of the individual, this theory is able to offer an explanation of where our experience comes from, why it is contradictory or incoherent and why and how it can change. It offers a way of understanding the importance of subjective motivation and the illusion of full subjectivity necessary for individuals to act in the world. It can also account for the

political limitations of change at the level of the subjective consciousness stressing the importance of the material relations and practices which constitute individuals as embodied subjects with particular but not inevitable forms of conscious and unconscious motivations and desires...it is for these reasons that...post-structuralism is a productive theory for feminism. (Weedon, 1983: 41)

A central desire of post-structuralism then is 'displacement' and it is here that post-structuralism might be seen to 'collide' with feminism. Their relationship, Elan argues, "is groundless in the sense that there is no common element between them. What makes it [the relation/s between post-structuralism and feminism] worth talking about...is that each opens onto the abyss" (1992:24). For Elan it is the de-stabilising and un-settling effects that both feminism and post-structuralism seek to affect - for feminism "the primary separation of sexual difference" whilst for post-structuralism "the aporia of cognition" (Elan, 1992: 25) - that makes an entanglement¹⁷ between the two propitious to "doing justice" (ibid.) Elan goes on to argue that where, as for Derrida, there is 'duty' in deconstruction, in the analogy of ethics, so there is a duty in feminism to "keep a space open for radical uncertainty. We do not know yet what women can do..." (Elan, 1992: 26). Feminism and post-structuralism are thus brought together here to a political end to consider what "kind of bridge can span the absolute rift?" (Elan, 1992:25):

Language...no longer guarantees identity, or meaning: all figuration is chaotic, disorganised and non-transparent...out of the chaos resulting from the collapse of master narratives a new space is produced...This space is of particular interest to feminism, not least because of its feminine connotations; It is the space of the unknown and of the 'master

¹⁷ I choose the nuance of 'entanglement' over alliance as feminism and post-structuralism are not easily or necessarily reconcilable and it appropriate therefore to stop and consider the syntactical ordering and grammatical coupling of the two terms. The conjunction 'and' has been chosen in preference to a hyphen which would have forced a decision about sequence and forged, through the 'common-sense' of standard English grammar, an illusion of easy co-operation that is theoretically far less sustainable, comfortable or even alluring. Rather 'and' allows a less resolved relation, affording the possibility of "change, without the desire for some kind of epistemological technology which can freeze the frame of motion" (Elan: 1994: 24). Elan further argues

the...work of feminism and deconstruction seeks difference where before there was only a margin demarcating interiority from exteriority..it would be possible then, to understand deconstruction and feminism not as systems of rules but as an endless search for rules. Judgement lies in the process of this search, which demands responsibility without allowing for the comfort of finality (ibid 101).

narratives' own 'non-knowledge', what has eluded them, what has engulfed them, a "space" over which the narrative has lost control (Belsey and Moore; 1989: 20)

Weedon similarly argues, although the binding of terms is undertaken less problematically for her, that:

feminist post-structuralism, then, is a mode of knowledge which uses post-structuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change. Through a concept of *discourse*, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, feminist post-structuralism is able...to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it. It is a theory which decentres the rational, self-present subject of humanism, seeing subjectivity and consciousness, as socially produced in language, as a site of struggle and potential change. (Weedon, 1993: 41)

Ryan concurs:

Politics for feminist post-structuralism refers to the opposing and subverting of power relations, by revealing the vested interests and social construction process that lie behind them (cf Frosh, 1987: 12). Generating new theoretical perspectives from which the dominant can be criticised and new possibilities envisaged is especially important. (Ryan 2001: 8)

In this sense all these ideas can be understood to share the "de-centring and deconstructive manner" (ibid.) of a post-structuralist approach that prefers rather "to operate against totalizing theories of meaning or knowledge" (ibid. 4) or modernist/structuralist notions of 'self'. Collectively these ideas make it possible to 'open up' the 'common-sense' of truth regimes to an examination of the social relations which construct and sustain them. This is the point at which post-structuralism becomes useful (and exciting) for feminism. Crucially this weaving together of ideas under the embrace of post-structuralism/feminism and feminism/poststructuralism is not:

about a search for rules, for methods, which when applied are guaranteed to produce a certain result or repeatable responses. Even displacing ones. The conversation between deconstruction and feminism will not necessarily generate predictable dialogues or gestures. The emphasis here is on change (Elan, 1990: 24).

Rather it is a reflexive 'undoing' that rejects the confines of paradigmatic prescription and brings to bear a patchwork of 'thinking tools' (Grenfell and James, 1998) that together mobilise an alternative and experimental approach to research: for this particular project 'the reader' becomes 'subject position' 'negotiating' the discourses about literacy that permeate the interiority and exteriority of institutional spaces.

This is perhaps where the bringing together of structuralism and feminism becomes most powerful in that post-structuralism enables a deconstruction of patriarchal forms of power and understanding of the production and deconstruction of the social structures the binary that is central to the work of a de-stabilising feminism.

Theory as practice: putting post-structuralism to play/work

So how to put these ideas to work towards post-structurally valid ways of doing research about reading?

The grammar of self outlined above makes it possible to see the 'reading subject', as *relationally situated* to reading practices that are in turn "patterned by social institutions and power relationships" (Barton and Hamilton, 1998:7). Although Barton and Hamilton, and many other advocates of the New Literacy Studies (see above) do not necessarily explicitly draw upon a post-structuralist discourse their understandings of literacy sit sympathetically with post-structuralist sensibilities:

some literacies become more dominant, visible, influential than others...Literacy is historically situated...Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (ibid.7).

Here moments of 'literacy', like those of 'subjectivity', might be understood not as

“reflections of...pure forms of objects, but rather the result of temporary discursive luminosity; they allow a thing to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer” (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 40).

and, like the ‘play’ of subject identity ‘ are *always already* shifting and in flux. Thus the meanings reading subjects make for reading and readers are contextually bound:

What...[the subject] can know and how it knows is always influenced by its temporality and its participation in a community of meanings (Usher and Edwards 2000:35)

In these terms the discursive field of literacy, or “community of meanings” through which literacy becomes to be known, becomes also a way by which the subject might come to ‘know itself’ as discourses “constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern” (Weedon, 1993: 108).

Methodologically then I am re-positioning this project, in response to Street’s (1995) call for ‘theoretical clarity’, within a post-structuralist ‘frame’ which, as I have shown above, problematises both the research questions and methods identified at its conception. It is crucial therefore at this point to reconfigure my research questions to ensure I am asking questions about reading and readers that are valid in terms of the notions of *post-structuralism* outlined above. Within the grammar of post-structuralism an exploration of reading within any context **can only** explore the meanings of reading and reader played out at a particular social, cultural or institutional locus. Thus we **might only** ask about sixteen to nineteen year old readers in Black Country colleges:

- What discourses about reading and readers are mobilised within this particular domain and which are dominant?
- How are different readers situated by legitimate discourses and for what purposes?
- How do different readers situate themselves within and without powerful and less powerful discourse? For what purposes? *And at what risk?*

Furthermore post-structuralist methodologies ***demand*** that we be reflexive about the construction of text and the subject positions claimed by and for an ~~author~~, further questions must therefore be posed about thesis writing as social practice; What kinds of social relations are mediated by this thesis? How might the thesis be played? And at what risk? To whom?

The Thesis Police. Soroke (2004),



Theory as method

No longer does the correct method guarantee true results, rather; method does not give truth (Polkingthorne, 1983: 249 in Lather 1991: 51).

In his own writings Foucault resists representing a model of 'methodological imperative' preferring rather "cautionary prescription" (Foucault, 1990c: 98) yet his writings mobilise the processes, described by others (see for example Kendall and Wickham, 1999) of what he calls 'archaeology' and 'genealogy' to explore the 'discursive field' which, he insists, is always historically specific. Archaeology (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 30) "provides us with a snapshot, a slice through the discursive nexus, genealogy pays attention to the processual aspects of the web of discourse – its ongoing character" (ibid.):

Archaeology helps us to explore the networks of what is said and what can be seen in a set of social arrangements: in the conduct of an archaeology one finds out something about the visible in 'opening up' statements and something about the statement in 'opening up visibilities. (1999: 25)

The objective of an archaeological approach in this case is to explore how the educational institution both as a social and cultural space and a mediator of expressed literacy curricula produces "forms of visibility" (ibid. 25) about literacy which reinforce the legitimated position that the college or school takes up.

Kendall and Wickham describe 7 key points that archaeological research attempts:

1. to chart the relationship between the sayable and the visible
2. to analyse the relation between one statement and other statements
3. to formulate the rules for the repeatability of statements (or their use)
4. to analyse the positions which are established between subjects in regard to statements
5. to describe the 'surfaces of emergence', places within which objects are designated and acted upon
6. to describe institutions which acquire authority and provide limits within which discursive objects may act or exist

7. to describe forms of specification which refer to the ways in which discursive objects are targeted.
(after Kendall and Wickham 1999: 27)

Foucault's notion of discourse, explored above is central to the archaeological project.

In this thesis I attempt to contribute something towards an archaeology of literacy education in the sixteen to nineteen context through critical analysis of the curricula documentation that act on and in this educational space and a consideration of the ways in which curricula mobilise particular discourses about reading and readers to construct learner identities and situate different groups of learners.

I then move on to explore the ways in which students acquiesce to or resist powerful or legitimate discourse through an exploration of students' readings of readings (the reading habits survey results, the TES article and ideas about readers and reading drawn from analysis of the curriculum documentation) of their reading habits and preferences. This exploration moves my analysis towards Foucault's notion of genealogy. Genealogy, Kendall and Wickham argue, is a way of 'putting archaeology' to work. Foucault explains:

if we were to characterise it [Foucault's method] in two terms, then 'archaeology' would be the appropriate methodology of the analysis of local discursivities, and 'genealogy' would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play (Foucault 1980: 85 cited in Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 31)

For Foucault power is "diagrammatic" (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 51) in that it is an imperfect operation that does not always perform efficiently or without problems. Like a car, Kendall and Wickham argue, power cannot inevitably maintain high performance, and like the rule of friction, where there is a force there is also a resistance, power is 'productive':

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands...they [individuals] are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power...individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault 1990: 98 cited in Usher and Edwards 1994: 89)

Finally I explore the ways in which individual subjects situate themselves within and without the institutionally dominant discourses when they tell the stories of themselves as readers. I begin with an analysis of my own literacy story which I wrote at the outset of this project as an exercise in exploring my own situatedness to the achievement / underachievement binary. Then I was interested in how it was that I was situated as a teacher rather than a learner within the field of specialist practice, now I am interested in how it is that I have played my subject identity in ways that are institutionally powerful. This work responds to Foucault's call that 'one must take responsibility for inventing or producing one's own self' (Foucault 1984: 39-42 cited in Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 41):

Foucault seeks maximum individual freedom by a more active route. Taken to its extreme, genealogy targets us, our 'selves': it seems we are meant to see beyond the contingencies that have made each of us what we are in order that we might think in ways that we have not thought and be in ways that we have not been: it is a tool we might use in a quest for freedom. Foucault wants us constantly to extend the limits of the necessary, to use this 'critical ontology of ourselves' by way of testing the 'limits that we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings' (1984:47) This aspect of genealogy is thus not so much about knowledge as about 'an agitation within' towards the capacity for self-reinvention. (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 30)

This is followed by an exploration of the reading stories of two students and two staff drawn from an FE college.

How might the thesis be played?

Consequently, and theoretically *necessarily*, 'I' must 'turn in on' the PhD thesis (product) and its production (authoring) as literacy practices "patterned by social institutions and power relationships" (Barton and Hamilton, 1998:7):

In *The Post Card* (1987), Derrida considers 'the movement of the posts' (p5) playing 'the post card against literature (p9). He says the 'library' and the 'history' themselves are precisely but 'posts', sites of passage or of relay among others' (27). This is what a thesis is. It is the location of its writer's passage, and it can be read: it gets into a library as a piece of social history. Further, it contains ideas that may simply not be seen. It is tight writing. Like the postcard it has particular boundaries and constraints (Rhedding Jones, 1997: 197).

To this end I draw on Belsey and Moore's (1989) understandings of culture, language and meaning, Butler's (1990) notion of 'gender trouble' and Stanley (1993) and Richardson's (2000) problematisations of writing research to re-think the process of writing a PhD. Feminist and post-structuralist / post-structuralist and feminist is understood here as the mobilisation of a politics that enables opposition to and subversion of the power relations of the discourses through which academic research, and its 'boundaries and constraints', is construed, constructed and represented. This is achieved "by revealing the vested interests and social construction process that lie behind them and the generation of new theoretical perspectives from which the dominant can be criticised and new possibilities envisaged" (Ryan, 2001: 8). This feminist/poststructuralist project of 'undoing' is also the focal point for its critics:

For anti-feminists, feminism corrupts the academy; for some feminists...By extension deconstruction gets dismissed as insufficiently academic, although not necessarily because it is too wedded to non-academic, political concerns. Instead, deconstruction is more often not taken seriously because allegedly it fails to conform to the proper scholarly standards for research. Thus it's not philosophy; it's not really literary criticism; it's not really political science; it's not even properly interdisciplinary. The list could grow, while the point remains the same: deconstruction fails to conform sufficiently to the standards of any pre-

existing disciplinary practices and hence is not considered academic (Elan, 1990: 92)

With this project then comes risk, the kind of risk that I have been alerted to by colleagues and tutors when trying to locate completed PhD thesis against which to dialogue and model my work. I was often and usually advised to 'play safe'. Rhedding Jones (1997: 194-201) expresses the place between pragmatism and desire to which this leads:

My desire was to do the doctorate differently, although it was important to me that I passed...My research could have been produced as a novel or an anthology of poetry; but I wanted a doctorate, and therefore selected my particular academic genres carefully, with a close eye to what might be possible now it is the mid-1990s.

Like Rhedding-Jones I write tentatively, in earshot of a feminist paradigm that urges "Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it" (Cixous, 1975 in Humm, 1993: 198) but with my eyes still directed at a symbolic order that situates and contextualises my choices:

My research could have been produced as a novel or an anthology of poetry; but I wanted a doctorate, and therefore selected my particular academic genres carefully, with a close eye to what might be possible now it is the mid-1990s. (Rhedding Jones, 2001:196)

At the turn of the century in the United Kingdom educational researchers might find themselves in dangerous times as the answers to "what counts as educational research?" has a political as well as an academic answer.

Questions of Writing?

How then, as one engaged in educational research, to write towards a feminist post-structuralist poetics? To find a position from which to recognise both the insufficiency of a gender-binary but simultaneously to speak the ways in which women's identities may be situated through and by it?

Judith Butler incites the (post-structuralist feminist) writer to 'gender trouble' (Butler 1990). Butler argues that the deconstruction of gender binary leaves gender identity as always already a 'performance' thus as Gauntlett

(2002:141) reminds “we do not face a choice of *whether* to give a performance. The self is always being made and re-made in daily interactions”:

the text continues, then, as an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity. (Butler 1990:33-34)

For Butler the issue of constructing (and deconstructing) identity as a writer becomes of central methodological importance and the acts of unsettling truths of identity become acts of ‘gender trouble’.

It is in to this end and on these terms that I attempt to re-appropriate the act of ‘thesis writing’, a ‘common sense’ academic practice, through an act of gender trouble to offer a ‘performance’ of identity that seeks to unsettle structuralist textual relations, the contract or settlement between ‘author’ and ‘reader’, and which in so doing simultaneously and inevitably, performs an act of critical literacy.

Thus I draw upon Richardson’s “crystal” metaphor (2001:929) and Lather’s (1992, 1997a, 1997b) and Middleton’s (1995) models of the “multi-voiced, multi-centred text”, to create a ‘patchwork’ of contrasting, hopefully diverse, at times contradictory, at times complementary, narratives about my research subject. The shift from one account to the next - autobiographical to ethnographic to scientific - demands shifts in genre, subject position, style and theoretical framing. The effect, I hope, and certainly the purpose is to write a ‘crystal’, that is to say, a research story that plays out a post-structuralist game:

[the crystal] combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous.

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose...Crystallization without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of "validity" (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves), and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically we know more and we doubt more. (Richardson 2000:934)

Whilst each narrative is 'self-sufficient' and can be read separately and independently the reader might also choose to read like a "textual collage by occasionally jumping across columns" (Middleton 1995:88), the reader, like the writer, is encouraged to "experiment with unorthodox, multiple, and idiosyncratic readings." (Ibid.). Thus we both, reader and writer, are prompted to examine, to confront, at the very least to become aware, that we bring 'codes' to reading and to come to a 'messy', 'stammering knowing' (Lather, 1997: 288).

My intent then, is to construct a reflexive post-structuralist text that 'celebrates' tensions and contradictions between 'ways of seeing' making no claim to an ultimate truth:

Don't fret about the 'right' word there. There is none. No truth between our lips. (Irigaray, 1977 in Humm ed, 1993: 209)

but which might be read as a 'series' of truth stories, or holistically as a fragmented, uneasy 'whole', a tangible representation of the notion that "any interpretation is at best temporary, specific to the discourse within which it is produced and open to challenge" (Weedon, 1987: 85). In so doing I aspire to subordinate the 'metaphysics of presence or 'logic of reason' (Irigaray 1977 in Hum ed 1993: 204) and to write a "she" (ibid) narrative that is "always in the process of weaving itself"(ibid.)

To this end I mobilise Butler's (1990) call to play competing subject identities and voices in close proximity so as to affect reflexivity through the effect of confusion and delusion:

To enter into the repetitive practices of this terrain of signification is not a choice, for the 'I' that might enter is always already inside: there is no possibility of agency or reality outside the discursive practices that give those terms the intelligibility that they have. The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, *to displace* the very gender norms that enable repetition itself. (Butler 1990:148)

Ultimately this takes us to a new place where we might begin to think through Foucault's question, posed at the very beginning of this thesis and cited here again:

We have to dig deeply to show how things have been historically contingent, for such and such reason intelligible, but not necessary. We must make the intelligible appear against a background of emptiness and deny its necessity. We must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces. To make a truly unavoidable challenge of the question. *What can be played?*' (Foucault 2000 139-140, my italics)

From where?

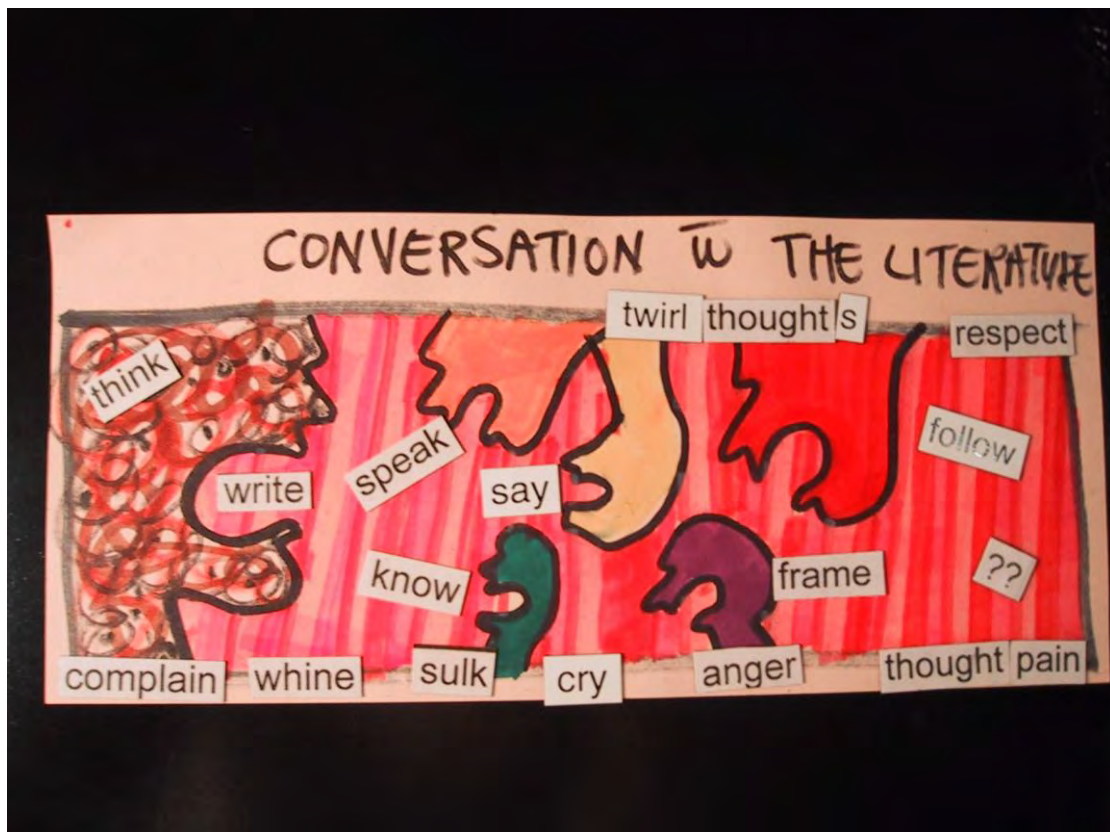
It is important at this point to pause and reflect on where this methodological shift takes me in terms of the 'origin' of this project; by origin I do not mean starting point or beginning but something more fundamental about the subject in time. Heidegger's notions about being and time offer an interesting perspective that positions the originator in a moment of 'origin':

Heidegger's word for us in *Being and Time* is *Dasein*, 'Being there', which does not mean we ourselves but rather where we find ourselves. Against the subjectivist tradition of picturing an individual as an ego or self, a thinking subject or transcendental unity of apperception, a mind or a consciousness, Heidegger characterises us in terms of historicity and belongingness, our situatedness, our finitude or temporality. We are historicised beings. Transcendence, seeing the world from God's point of view is closed to us. So we can never, for example, bring ourselves before ourselves as objects. That is, we can never conceptualise or objectify ourselves or see ourselves either from the outside or from the inside out; rather, we encounter ourselves in our temporality in a strange way. In section 40 of *Being and Time* Heidegger says that it is "in anxiety [that] Dasein gets brought before itself through its own being" (228). In anxiety our being makes itself felt as that which threatens to withhold itself from us. In anxiety the question of being is brought home as a question of most urgent concern. (Bruns, 2004: 2)

In section 41 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger relates anxiety to care, not in the sense of an emotion we experience but as a feature of the structure of dasein: as a component of our being in the world in a temporally and spatially specific sense. It is the other side of Heidegger's notion of 'guilt' that arises from the sense of our ontological finitude – that of all the possible selves we may be we have limited ourselves.

My project arises from a certain contingent personal, professional history, to the intersection of a number of accidental facts. It is grounded in this contingency, but it is also informed by a sense of the structural care (*sorge*) that is inherent to dasein – that may take many forms, but that is a reaction to the 'thrown-ness' of dasein, rather than a transcendental position of commanding view.

Bonnie Soroke, *Conversations in the Literature*, 2004



Act 3

*The reading habits of 16 –19
year olds: a quantitative story
about readers*

This survey focused specifically on the leisure reading habits of students in the sixteen to nineteen age range with a view to shedding some light on what we think we know about students as readers.

Students participating in the study were directed to think only about their recreational/leisure time reading and specifically not about any college course related reading. Following a number of focus group meetings with both students and colleagues to establish priorities and areas of focus the final questionnaire posed 19 questions about regularity of reading, favourite genres, time given over to reading, influences on reading choices, use of libraries and recently read titles.

In the summer term of 2000, 500 questionnaires were distributed to students studying on English/literacy programmes, from Wordpower to A level, across seven Black Country FE colleges. At the time this represented all but one of the colleges represented in the then Black Country Partnership for Learning. Three hundred and thirty eight questionnaires (67%) were completed and returned.

Survey Findings

Participant profile

1. The average age of participants was 17 (5 participants chose not to report age).
2. 77 participants were males constituted (23%) and 261 female (77%)
3. Participants were asked to self-define their ethnic origin and predominantly described themselves as British (74%) with Indian as a second significant group (17.5%) Other ethnic groups represented in the sample included Bengali, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sikh, Hindi, Punjabi, British Indian, Mixed, Black Caribbean, Afro-Caribbean, African Jamaican, Black African.
4. Participants predominantly spoke English in their home environment (82.5%), the next largest group was students speaking English and

Punjabi or Gujarati (11.8%). Other languages spoken at home included Chinese, Greek and Arabic.

5. Participants were drawn from all four of the Black Country postal areas B(45.6%), DY (38.5%), WV (11.5%) WS (2.4%)
6. Students were predominantly studying for A levels (80.8%)

Whole cohort trends

Just over half of students read for pleasure at least once or twice a week, with a significant minority never choosing reading as recreational activity.

Table 1 Reading for pleasure

HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ FOR PLEASURE? (%)	
Everyday	3
Most Days	24
Once or twice a week	24
Not regularly	34
Never	15

Preferred reading

Newspapers constituted the most popular form of reading. The positive response rate was high for both questions that dealt with newspaper reading, to the direct question 'do you read a newspaper?' 95% of students responded yes, to the question how likely are you to read a newspaper only 1.5% chose never and 16.5% rarely. 81.9% of participants report that they read a paper everyday or most days. Magazines and fiction constituted the next two most popular categories with 61% of participants reading magazines and 51% reading fiction most days or everyday. Fiction was also the type of reading on which students were most notably divided with 49% never or rarely choosing this type of reading.

Table 2 Choosing different types of reading

HOW OFTEN DO YOU CHOOSE THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF READING? (%)				
	Everyday	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Newspapers	32.1	49.8	16.5	1.5
Magazines	4.5	56.3	38.3	0.9
Fiction	10	40.7	43.2	6.1
Biographies	0.6	4.9	59.1	35.4
Non-fiction	3.1	26.4	54	16.6
Internet	7.3	34.1	37.5	21.1
Poetry	2.1	11.6	54.6	31.7

Newspapers

The range and variety of newspaper reading was considerable: The 338 students reported 387 references to newspapers, mentioning 24 titles. 44% of the papers they read were Locals and 56% Nationals. Of National newspapers titles 29% chosen were broadsheets and 71% tabloid. Although they are only slightly more likely to read a Local paper than a National they were 21/2 times more likely to read a tabloid over a broadsheet. The majority read more than one paper and 12 of the 338 participants (3.5%) reported reading a tabloid and a broadsheet. Popular titles were;

Table 3 Newspaper preferences

NEWSPAPER TITLE	FREQUENCY
Express and Star	72 (18.6%)
The Sun	57 (14.3%)
Daily Mail	53 (13.7%)
The Metro News	51 (13.1%)
The Times & Sunday Times	39 (10.1%)
The Daily Mirror	30 (7.75%)
The Evening Mail	14 (3.6%)
Unspecified local paper	10 (2.6%)
Daily Express	10 (2.6%)
The Telegraph & Sunday Telegraph	9 (2.3%)
The Guardian	8 (2%)
The Stourbridge	6
The Independent	6
Sandwell Chronicle	5
The News of the World	3
Halesowen	2
Unspecified Sunday Paper	2
Unspecified broadsheet	1
The Observer	1
Unidentified	1
The Socialist Worker	1
NME*	1
Pride*	1
Centro news	1
The People	1
The Lawyer*	1
The Daily Star	1
Total	387

Magazines

The next most popular reading choice, magazines, was investigated further at the request of the student pilot group. The early drafts of the questionnaire reflected the priorities of the teacher focus groups and hadn't asked about magazine reading, the student pilot group felt that magazine reading represented an important aspect of their leisure reading so questions about magazine reading were added. The majority of students (88%) reported that they read magazines with (56%) reading a magazine most days. Popular genres are summarised in table 4.

Table 4 Popular magazine genres

GENRE	FREQUENCY
Young women's	115
Women's	62
Music	22
Men's	21
Heavy metal music	14
Sport/football	13
Film	12
TV listings	11
Gossip TV	11
Gossip celebrity	8
Hair and beauty	8
(Football	7)
Newspaper magazine supplement	6
Cars	4
Games	4
Hobbies	4
Computing	4
Gossip	3
Black culture	2
Consumer	2
Current affairs	2
Animals	1
Gay interest	1
Health	1
Motor	1
Musician	1

Popular titles are summarised in table 5.

Table 5 Popular magazine titles

POPULARITY	TITLE	FREQUENCY
1	More	55
2	Sugar	23
3	Bliss	14
3	J17	14
3	Kerrang	14
4	Cosmopolitan	13
4	FHM	13
5	Be	10
5	Company	10
6	Empire	8
6	N19	8
7	Newspaper Supplement	6
7	NME	6
8	Elle	5
8	Now	5
9	Loaded	4
9	Max Power	4
9	New woman	4
9	Q	4
9	TV Times	4
9	Woman's Own	4
10	Hello	3
10	Looks	3
10	Marie Claire	3
10	Maxim	3
10	Melody Maker	3
	Total	243

The majority of most popular titles had a strong 'gendered' element with the frequency of women's interest magazines significantly outweighing men's interest by about 8 to 1. Music, sport and film represented the biggest special interest categories and 'Kerrang' the most popular special interest title.

Book Reading

In the four weeks prior to the questionnaire students had read on average two books, and in total had read 399 books by 209 authors. 34% reported borrowing books from a library at least twice a month.

Table 6 Books in last four weeks

HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU READ IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?				
None	Up to 2	Upto4	Upto6	More than 6
29.5%	45.8%	16.9%	3.1%	4.7%

42% owned more than thirty books other than those purchased in connection with college related activities and just under 10% own five or under books.

Table 7 Number of books owned

HOW MANY BOOKS DO YOU OWN?				
0-5	5-10	11-20	21-30	30+
9.6%	12.7%	21%	14.6%	42%

There were no categories of book that a majority of students chose very often. 50% of participants chose modern fiction quite often or very often, but 25% never chose this type of book. Books about travel were the least popular option with 90% of students reporting that they hardly ever or never chose this type of book.

Table 8 Preference for genre, 4 preference groups

HOW OFTEN DO YOU CHOOSE THESE TYPES OF BOOKS? (findings = %)				
	Very often	Quite often	Hardly ever	Never
Modern fiction	13.9%	36.4%	25.2%	24.5%
Horror	13.3	30	34.5	22.1
Thriller	10.3	36.2	28.3	25.2
Murder	9.5	29.9	34.5	26.2
Classics	8.8	21.6	36.3	32.9
Short stories	8.6	25.8	35	30.7
Science	8.5	14.2	34.4	42.9
Drama	7.3	24.6	31.6	36.5
Romance	6.7	22	27.1	44.2
Women's writing	6.7	21	35.3	37.1
Action	3.0	24.8	39.4	32.7
Travel	2.4	7.6	29.4	60.6

Table 9 Preference for genre, 2 preference groups

HOW OFTEN DO YOU CHOOSE THESE TYPES OF BOOKS? Responses collapsed to two preference groups (findings = %)		
	Quite/very	Hardly/never
Modern fiction	50.3	49.7
Thriller	46.5	53.5
Horror	43.3	56.6
Murder	39.4	60.7
Short stories	34.4	65.7
Drama	31.9	68.1
Classics	30.4	69.2
Romance	28.7	71.3
Action	27.8	72.1
Women's writing	27.7	72.4
Science	22.7	77.3
Travel	10	90

The top titles of the total 399 mentioned are summarised in table 10 below.

Table 10 Books read in last four weeks

CAN YOU REMEMBER ANY TITLES YOU'VE READ IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?			
POPULARITY	AUTHOR	TITLE	FREQUENCY
1	J. K. Rowling	<i>Harry Potter*</i>	11
2	Jane Austen	Pride and Prejudice	10
3	Alex Garland	The Beach	9
4	Helen Fielding	Bridget Jones	8
5	Brett Easton	American Psycho	6
5	Bill Bryson	Notes from a	6
5	Thomas Keneally	Playmaker	6
6	Thomas Harris	Hannibal	5
6	Bronte, C	Jane Eyre	5
6	Sylvia Plath	The Bell Jar	5
7	George Orwell	Nineteen Eighty Four	4
7	George Orwell	Animal Farm	4
7	Margaret Atwood	Handmaids Tale	4
7	Louisa May Alcott	Little Women	4
7	Carol Ann Duffy	Mean Time	4
7	Jane Austen	Sense and Sensibility	4
7	Shakespeare	Taming of the Shrew	4
7	JRR Tolkien	The Hobbit	4
7	Bronte, E	Wuthering Heights	4

8	Frank McCourt	Angela's Ashes	3
8	Josie Lloyd	Come Together	3
8	I Crichton	Jurassic Park	3
8	JRR Tolkien	Lord of the Rings	3
8	Sarah Harvey	Misbehaving	3
8	Stephen King	Misery	3
8	Shakespeare	Romeo and Juliet	3
8	Helen Fielding	Brigitte Jones, The Edge of Reason	3
8	Richard Sheri	The Rivals	3
8	Harper Lee	To Kill and Mocking Bird	3

* Harry Potter title unspecified

The most commonly cited authors, of the 209 mentioned in total, are summarised in table 11.

Table 11 Favourite authors

POPULARITY	AUTHOR	FREQUENCY
1	Stephen King	22
2	Terry Pratchett	18
3	Jane Austen	17
4	Shakespeare	13
5	J. K. Rowling	11
6	Danielle Steele	10
6	Helen Fielding	10
7	Alex Garland	9
7	Bill Bryson	9
7	George Orwell	9
7	J.R.R. Tolkien	9
8	Anne Rice	7
8	Charles Dickens	7
8	Thomas Keneally	7
9	Bret Easton Ellis	6
9	Virginia Andrews	6
10	Bronte, C	5
10	Brian Jacques	5
10	Frank McCourt	5
10	Roald Dahl	5
10	Sylvia Plath	5
10	Thomas Harris	5
11	Bronte, E	4
11	Carol Ann Duffy	4
11	Jane Green	4
11	Louisa May Alcott	4
11	Margaret Atwood	4
11	Nick Hornby	4
11	Sebastian Faulks	4

There is an interesting combination of modern and classic texts here with some that are likely to be set texts. The preponderance of the latter could be explained in a variety of ways; it might indicate that college reading has crossed over into recreational reading, that college booklists give them ideas for reading, that they prefer to associate themselves with college/teacher 'endorsed' texts or that they are most likely to remember the titles of books they've studied and felt pressured to write something. There is some evidence in the literature (see for example Parry and Crossley *ibid.*) that respondents are likely to over-report about issues that impact upon their sense of public status and identity, given the ideas about texts and reading popular among the teachers talking above, the responses to this part of the survey in particular are being explored in the second stage of the study. And indeed issues around identity management must temper and frame the findings of this survey more generally.

The majority of participants (70%) reported that they usually finished books once they'd started them and 71% enjoyed re-reading favourite books.

Influences on choice of books

As summarised in table 11 friends, then teachers were the most influential category of the listed groups on the reading choices participants made. Forty percent of respondents felt their mother to be quite or very influential on their reading choices and this was the highest score for any family member – no significant difference was found here between male and female respondents – fathers and siblings were rated similarly. The Internet was notably not very or not at all influential for the majority of participants.

Table 12 Influences on book choices

WHO OR WHAT INFLUENCES THE CHOICES YOU MAKE ABOUT READING? (%)				
	Very influential	Quite influential	Not very	Not at all
Friends	13.3	45	23.9	17.8
Teachers	14.5	42.9	31.1	11.5
Newspaper	13	40.5	30.2	16.3
TV	7.9	37.8	35.3	19
Cinema	11.2	34.7	34.7	19.3
Mother	12.1	28.2	27.3	32.4
Adverts	3.9	27	41.2	27.9
Siblings	6.7	20.2	30	43.1
Father	6.7	20.1	29.3	43.9
Other Family member	3.8	17.1	30.1	49.1
Internet	2.4	17	30.8	49.8

Time spent reading

There is strong evidence in the literature that time devoted to recreational reading decreases with the onset of adolescence (Whitehead 1977, Ross and Simone 1982, Greaney 1980, McCoy, Larson and Higginson 1991). I was interested therefore to explore how much leisure time participants gave to reading in relation to other activities. In particular I was interested in whether the pressure to work part-time might impact upon recreational activities.

Table 13a Time spent on leisure activities

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND ON THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES?					
	No time	15 minutes	Up to 30 minutes	Up to an hour	More than an hour
Socialising	2.2	0.9	5.6	22.4	68.8
TV	0.6	2.4	10.6	26.9	59.4
Part time work	43.3	0.9	3.0	8.5	44.2
Hobbies	29.7	3.6	14.5	22.8	29.3
Films	32.7	9.6	9.9	25.9	21.9
Computer (not games)	17.7	12.2	25.3	27.1	17.7
Playing sport	48.8	12.5	17.7	11.3	9.8
Reading	4.2	22.7	35.8	29.1	8.2
Computer games	64.2	9.7	12.4	8.8	4.8

Although reading came very near the bottom of the 'over 1 hour column', it scored above other activities in the '15 minutes', '30 minutes' and 'up to an

hour' column, see table 13b. Whilst students do not seem to be engaging in lengthy bouts of recreational reading we might understand these findings to mean that recreational reading is indeed an aspect of their day to day routine.

Table 13b

	No time (%)	15 minutes (%)	Up to 30 minutes (%)	Up to an hour (%)	More than an hour (%)
Reading	4.2	22.7	35.8	29.1	8.2
Computer (not games)	17.7	12.2	25.3	27.1	17.7
TV	0.6	2.4	10.6	26.9	59.4
Films	32.7	9.6	9.9	25.9	21.9
Hobbies	29.7	3.6	14.5	22.8	29.3
Socialising	2.2	0.9	5.6	22.4	68.8
Playing sport	48.8	12.5	17.7	11.3	9.8
Computer games	64.2	9.7	12.4	8.8	4.8
Job	43.3	0.9	3.0	8.5	44.2

Reader confidence

The final question asked students to rate how confident they felt about their reading skills.

Table 14 Reader confidence

Extremely	Quite	Not Very	Not at all
29.5%	62%	7%	1.5%

Table 14 indicates that nearly a third of students reported feeling extremely confident about their skills and 91.5% felt at least quite confident.

A summary of these findings was presented at the 2002 BERA conference at Exeter University (see Kendall 2002b)

Significant differences by social group

Statistical tests were conducted to compare differences between identified groups within the sample:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Home language
- Educational attainment

Categorisation was self-reported. The following statistically significant differences were identified:

Male and female participants

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the **frequency of reading choices**. Female participants were more likely to read magazines ($M=2.31$, $SD=0.57$) than their male counterparts ($M=2.50$, $SD = 0.60$; $t(331) = -2.45$, $p=0.02$). No differences were found in the choices male and female readers made about genre other than in expressed preference for choosing **romance** fiction where a significant difference was found in the score for females ($M=3.02$, $SD=0.97$) and males ($M=3.29$, $SD=0.91$; $t(327)=-2.06$, $p=0.04$).

Where the range of leisure activities that participants engaged in were compared differences were found the time spent playing computer games and sport; male participants were reported spending more time playing computer games ($M=2.58$, $SD=1.56$; $T(95.82)=5.42$, $p=0.00$) than females ($M=1.59$, $SD=1.03$) and more time playing sport ($m=3.56$, $sd=1.55$; $t(275)=-2.08$, $p=3.09$ for males compared with ($M=3.09$, $SD=1.62$) for females).

Ethnicity

The results in this section must be analysed with caution as the small number of representatives in some identified categories caused made these groups unsuitable categories for statistical analysis. The participants gave a total of thirty one different descriptions of their ethnic groupings. Participants predominantly identified themselves as white or British ($N=249$, 73.7%), a

further significant group was Indian (N=59, 17.5%), although other ethnic groups were identified they only made up a small proportion of the total responses. For the purposes of statistical analysis groups with only 1 participant were treated as outliers and removed from the data set. Eight groups were then identified for analysis. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test were unable to be performed as one or more groups had fewer than two cases. These were again treated as outliers and moved from the data set. Four groups remained:

1. White British/anglo-saxon/European;
2. Asian ;
3. Afro Caribbean, Black Caribbean, African Jamaican, Black African;
4. Dual heritage - African Indian, Arabic English, Persian Pakistani.

For **reading fiction** there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in score for the four of the groups. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.40$, $SD=0.70$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=2.81$, $SD=0.83$). No other statistical differences were found.

For **reading on the Internet** there was a significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in score for the four ethnic groups. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.80$, $SD=0.83$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=2.81$, $SD=0.83$). No other statistical differences were found.

For amount of time **watching films** there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in the score for the four ethnic groups and post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.57$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=3.79$, $SD=1.33$). No other significant differences between groups were found. This difference was mirrored in the findings for the amount of **time spent playing**

on the computer for group 1 and group 2. No other significant differences were found.

Home language

Six home language groups were identified as follows:

1. English;
2. Bi-lingual English and an Asian minority language
i.e. Punjabi, Gujerati);
3. Asian minority language;
4. Chinese;
5. English and Greek;
6. Arabic.

Language groups 4, 5 and 6 had only 1, 1 and 2 participants respectively. As the overall sample size was 338 these three categories were treated as outliers for the purposes of statistical analysis and removed from the data set. Analysis of the data by home language group pointed to a considerable degree of difference across groups in choice of leisure activities, time spent reading and reading preferences between groups and a notably a distinctly greater difference between groups emerged than when the data was analysed by ethnicity.

Comparisons of **time spent reading** found a significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in score for the three groups. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=3.18$, $SD=1.00$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=2.46$, $SD=0.97$). No other significant differences were found.

There was a statistical difference at the $p=0.05$ level in score for the three remaining language groups in reporting of the **frequency of reading fiction**.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.38$, $SD=0.73$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=2.87$, $SD=0.78$). No other significant differences were found

Comparisons of **genre preferences** revealed a number of significant differences by language group:

- **Expressed preference for horror fiction** was significantly different at the $p<0.05$ level for the three groups. Post-hoc tests using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.61$, $SD=0.95$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=3.29$, $SD=0.91$). No other significant differences were found
- **Expressed preference for thriller books** was significantly different at the $p<0.05$ level for the three groups. Post hoc tests using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.64$, $SD=0.96$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.65$) and that group 2 ($M=2.69$, $SD=0.95$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.65$). No significant differences were found between groups 1 and 2.
- **Expressed preference for books about murder and or murderers** was significantly different at the $p<0.05$ level for the three groups. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.72$, $SD=0.94$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=3.46$, $SD=0.88$) No other significant differences were found.
- **Expressed preference for modern fiction** was significantly different at the $p<0.05$ for the three groups. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.50$, $SD=0.98$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=3.10$, $SD=0.97$). Group 1 ($M=2.50$, $SD=0.98$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=3.31$, $SD=1.03$). No significant differences were found between group 2 and group 3.

Significant differences were also noted between groups for book ownership and library borrowing. For **book ownership** there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in score for the three language groups. Post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.35$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=3.05$, $SD=1.31$). No other significant differences were found between groups. For **library borrowing** a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in score for the three language groups was found. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test found indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.91$, $SD=1.07$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=3.17$, $SD=1.27$). Group 2 ($M=2.92$, $SD=0.87$) was significantly from group 3 ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.27$). No significant difference was found between group 1 and 2.

A statistical difference at the $p < 0.05$ level was noted in participants reporting of their confidence as readers. There was a significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level for **expressing confidence as a reader**. Post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=1.77$, $SD=0.64$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=2.05$, $SD=0.52$). No other differences in reader confidence were found.

There was a statistically significant difference in the amount of time spent **watching films** at the $p < 0.05$ level in score for the three language groups. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.74$, $SD=1.58$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=3.90$, $SD=1.28$). Group 1 was significantly different from group 3 ($M=4.00$, $SD=1.36$). Group 2 did not differ significantly from differ from group 3.

There was also a significant difference for the three groups in the amount of time spent **playing on the computer** at the $p < 0.05$ level. Post –hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=3.05$, $SD=1.32$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.41$). No other significant differences were found.

The above finding contrasted interestingly with the differences found for **reading on the internet** where a statistical difference at the $p < 0.05$ level was also found but here post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.78$, $SD=0.85$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=2.21$, $SD=0.98$). No other significant differences between groups were found. The contrast in these last two findings suggests that students from different language groups interact with their computers in quite different ways either because they prefer different kinds of activities or because they choose different ways of understanding and classifying the activities they participate in.

Educational categories

Participants were asked to categorise the type and level of programme they were studying by identifying themselves as belonging to one of the following five groups:

1. GCSE
2. A/S level
3. A level
4. Wordpower
5. Other – included key skills and GNVQ no level specified)

These groups have been chosen as all students in the target population were students following English and literacy programmes so it was felt that students in the sample would fall into one of the identified categories.

Group 4 had a very small number of participants and was treated as an outlier for the purposes of statistical analysis and removed from the data set.

Analysis by educational level revealed a statistically significant range of differences in expressed reading preference by genre and medium and influences on reading choice. Interestingly fewer differences emerged around

preferred leisure activities more generally. Consistently the most significant differences emerged between group 1 and the other two groups.

Expressed preferences for reading by genre included;

- A significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level was found for frequency of **reading a newspaper**. Post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test indicated that group 1 were much less likely than group 2 to choose newspaper reading mean score for group 1 ($M=2.07$, $SD=1.00$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=1.54$, $SD=0.64$). No other significant differences between groups were found.
- A significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level was found for **expressed preference for fiction**, post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=2.07$, $SD=1.00$) was significantly different from group 2 ($M=2.36$, $SD=0.73$). Group 1 ($M=2.07$, $SD=1.00$) was also found to be significantly different from group 3 ($M=2.41$, $SD=0.75$).
- A significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level was found for expressed **preference for thrillers**, post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=3.14$, $SD=1.06$) was significantly different from both group 3 ($M=2.67$, $SD=0.94$) and group 5 ($M=1.80$, $SD=1.10$).
- A significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level was found for expressed **preference for modern novels** across the groups. Post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for group 1 ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.84$) different from group 3 ($M=2.48$, $SD=0.99$). No other significant differences between groups were found.

When it comes to **making choices about reading** statistical analysis suggests that groups 1 and 2 differed from group 3 in their likelihood to be influenced positively by their peer group. There was a statistically significant difference of $p < 0.05$ across the groups for the **positive influence of friends** on reading choice. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated

that the mean score for group 1 ($M=3.00$, $SD= 0.98$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.90$) and group 2 ($M=3.07$, $SD=0.87$) was significantly different from group 3 ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.90$).

A significant difference ($p<0.05$) across groups was also indicated in the category of **book ownership**. Levels of book ownership were lowest in group 1 and this group was found through post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test to be significantly different ($M=2.75$, $SD=1.17$) from groups 2 ($M=3.93$, $SD=1.33$) and 3 ($M=3.75$, $SD=1.36$).

Key findings from the reading habits survey

The whole cohort findings suggest that there is much evidence to indicate that students do read regularly and that they do seem to be engaging with an interesting and sometimes eclectic variety of text. They are generally confident about their skills as readers and are not overly influenced by any one factor when it comes to making choices about what they prefer to read.

A reader's gender seemed to influence the range of leisure activities they were engaged in other than reading, with male readers more likely to report participation in sport and playing computer games. Female readers were more likely than their male counterparts to report a preference for magazine reading.

A reader's ethnicity impacted on their expressed preferences for fiction, watching films and time spent interacting with computers. Students in ethnic group 1 (white/European) were more likely to report a preference for reading fiction than their counterparts in group 2 (Asian) whereas students in group 2 were more likely to prefer watching films or reading on the Internet and playing on the computer than their peers in group 1. Students belonging to groups 3 and 4 seemed not to express preferences that were statistically different to other groups.

Home language and educational category yielded the greatest range of statistical differences between groups.

Students whose home language was English were more likely to spend their leisure time reading than were their counterparts whose home language was an Asian minority language. Bi-lingual students were more likely to express a preference for fiction and home language seemed to impact significantly on preferences for particular genres of text. Students whose home language was English tended to own more books than their bi-lingual peers and both these groups of participants were more likely to borrow books from the library. Group 3 reported higher levels of reader confidence than group 1. Students whose home language was not English or solely English were more likely to spend time watching films and bi-lingual participants were more likely to spend time playing on the computer than their English only counterparts and those whose home language was a minority language were more likely to spend time playing computer games than their English only peers.

These results suggest that students who defined their home language as English were more likely to spend time reading books whilst their bi-lingual and minority language counterparts were more likely to spend time interacting with their computers, either reading on the internet or gaming. However despite finding less time for traditional types of reading students who spoken a minority language at home were more likely to report feeling confident about their abilities as readers than their home language English peers.

Students studying at A/S level were more likely to read a newspaper than students following GCSE programmes and all students studying at higher levels were more likely to prefer fiction than GCSE students. GCSE students preferred thrillers and expressed a notable preference for modern fiction. The latter group were also more likely to be influenced by their friends when they made choices about reading and they owned fewer books than A/S or A2 students.

Interlude



Taking a break February 2003

Foucault tells us that we must work on our 'selves', 'one must take responsibility for inventing or producing one's own self' (Foucault 1984: 39-42 cited in Kendall and Wickham 1999:41)

Foucault seeks maximum individual freedom by a more active route. Taken to its extreme, genealogy targets us, our 'selves' : it seems we are meant to see beyond the contingencies that have made each of us what we are in order that we might think in ways that we have not thought and be in ways that we have not been: it is a tool we might use in a quest for freedom. Foucault wants us constantly to extend the limits of the necessary, to use this 'critical ontology of ourselves' by way of testing the 'limits that we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings' (Foucault 1984:47) This aspect of genealogy is thus not so much about knowledge as about 'an agitation within' towards the capacity for self-reinvention.' (Kendall and Wickham 1999:30)

I am 'revising' my thesis at this moment, it's a cold February day and I've only been outside to visit the post-office. It has just turned five o'clock which means I'm entering into the time of day that I have been least enjoying during my sabbatical, the time when my concentration begins to wane and I am impatient for my family to come home so that I can again hear the sound of my voice as we chat easily and comfortably about the kind of day we've had. My struggle with Foucault is perspectivised by my partner's daily consternations about his struggle to manage the tension between the demands of his role as head of school in a Black Country FE college and his compassion for and political allegiance to his hard-working, underpaid colleagues. By contrast my daughter might need me to join her role-play: we might be Cinderella, 'go to the baker's' or take a train journey. Temporarily I forget that what I am doing is

important (to me) as the realities of day-to-day life crash in and relieve the stress of finding Foucault hard to 'know'. I am glad that being a mother and a partner give me space to move away from the sense that I do not 'know' Foucault as well as I feel an 'academic' should. As usual I wonder 'how would what I know stand up to interrogation?' I feel the world of 'the academy' as a 'battleground', and although this is not always my experience of it, I am ever on guard for the counter-attack just around the next corner.

Waiting to become a researcher (Soroke, 2004)



Pct 4

Reading and re-reading the
reading habits survey data

Scene 1

On reflection

Following the presentation of the first findings from the reading habits survey to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference (Kendall, 2002) the following report appeared in the Times Educational Supplement (TES)

Books lose out to the tabloids

Half of the FE students taking English courses in a deprived part of the Midlands rarely or never read for pleasure, according to a survey of students aged sixteen to nineteen at seven colleges in the Black Country.

Their most popular reading matter is tabloid newspapers and magazines. Four out of five of the 340 students surveyed were studying for A-levels and three-quarters were female, yet 15 per cent said they never read for pleasure and 34 per cent did not do so regularly.

The rest read for pleasure at least once or twice a week but only 3 per cent did so every day. Most preferred to socialise and watch TV.

The findings were presented to last week's British Educational Research Association conference by Alex Kendall of the University of Wolverhampton. They supported views of college teachers who told her many A-level students had "poor reading skills and weak vocabulary" and few read beyond their coursework. (Passmore, 2002:32)

Some months later in April 2003 the press office at the West Midlands University where I work was contacted by a BBC Radio researcher who had come across the BERA abstract via the TES article on the Internet. I was invited by this researcher to contribute to a late night BBC radio discussion programme addressed to the BBC 'Big Read' campaign. The aim of this campaign was to identify the nations "best loved novel" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/top100.shtml>). The "students don't read novels" quote in the TES article had apparently caught the researcher's eye and I was invited to share my knowledge about the 'illiteracy' of young people

but also to possibly identify a high consuming or idiosyncratic reader who might also be able to join the discussion. This suggested that a connection was 'instinctively' being made by the researcher between students choosing to/not to read fiction and the degree to which they were or weren't 'literate', certainly it was not implied that the 'interesting' reader might be found amongst the student participants.

Reading these readings

The report of the research by Passmore was printed in the Times Educational Supplement (TES), on the front page of the FE Focus section, the section of the paper intended for professionals working in the further education sector, on September 20th 2002. This page of the paper is devoted to 'news' items; the articles that accompanied this one were entitled 'Birth of learning accounts mark II' and the main headline 'exclusive' "Surprise pay U-turn to halt strike threat". I had initially been contacted by the TES the week before the BERA conference when an abstract of the paper had been published in the conference material. The abstract had read:

This paper explores the initial findings of the first stage of a study of the reading practices of sixteen to nineteen year olds studying in FE environments across the Black Country. The study comprises a survey of reading habits followed by a qualitative, ethnographic exploration of reading practices and discursive constructions of readers and reading within a single institution. This paper is concerned with and begins to theorise about the initial – whole cohort - findings of the reading habits survey. (Kendall, 2002:35)

The reporter who contacted me had asked for a copy of the full paper and on receipt, and before publication of her article, we had a telephone discussion about the points she had selected to include and why she thought they were of interest to the readership. One of her particular concerns was that these 'students of English', all the participants had been following an English programme, seemed to show no special interest in or particular preference for reading novels or the types of texts which might be categorised as 'literary'. I pointed out that this particular bit of data was one of many findings outlined in

the paper and that perhaps there were many other reasons for teachers to feel optimistic about what the participants had reported. I reiterated my point of view in a letter to the TES a couple of weeks later:

I write with regard to what I felt was a misleading report of my study into the reading habits of Black Country sixteen to nineteen year olds (FE Focus 25/09/02). Whilst it was accurate to report that 49% of participants rarely or never chose to read fiction, to isolate this finding from their very positive responses about other types of reading, in particular magazines and newspapers, is both selective and value driven. These readers reported a varied, interesting diet of reading; 89% reported reading a newspaper most days or everyday, their top five most popular authors included Stephen King and Jane Austen, and 56% read a magazine everyday. Participants expressed a clear preference for recreational reading over playing computer games and 66% reported spending at least half an hour reading for pleasure every day. Unlike your reporter, I felt that there was much in these findings for further education teachers to feel optimistic about. The participants in this study were self-confident readers making conscious and purposeful decisions about what, when and where to read. It is surely high time that we began to recognise, respect and value both the range of reading young people engage in and the reading cultures within which they participate. (Kendall, 2002: 32)

Whilst I am not claiming that the TES simplistically reproduces or represents the value base of teaching professionals, or that teaching professionals are a knowable, easily described, homogeneous group outside of their professional commonality, what is significant is that Passmore's 'choice' to single out the issue of students not reading fiction or 'literature', and her (and our?) implied 'otherness' to them, is considered 'newsworthy' that it is an issue which might legitimately command coverage, and a dominant positioning, within a professional weekly newspaper. Passmore seems to take for granted the sympathy of her audience, and certainly the success of the article as a piece of journalism for the TES might be seen to be reliant upon readers finding a resonance with Passmore's concerns and anxieties about students' reading habits and preferences.

Passmore's articulation of the 'problem' of sixteen to nineteen year olds as readers began to reverberate with the reflections on students as readers offered by teachers in the survey I had undertaken in 1998 to help orientate

my PHD proposal toward 'real' and 'genuine' professional concern, I returned to the quotes cited above as starting point, and justification, for this thesis:

John: 'many A level student **do not read**. Some have **limited vocabulary** and **weak understanding of grammar**. At A level **limited reading** means that students **do not have the cultural capital** to enable them to do well at A level.'

Mary: 'many A level students have **poor reading skills** and **weak vocabulary**...very few undertake additional reading other than for coursework. **Very few read a decent paper** and only **a minority seem to read novels.**'

As I begun to re-read this data with 'new eyes' I noted a resonant sympathy with Passmore's understandings of a group of readers 'in deficit'. The vocabulary of insufficiency, "poor", "limited", "weak" writes large an estimation of inadequacy. The new teachers I had also cited drew from a similar lexical range:

Carole: "*(what do you expect of your students as readers?)* Of my GCSE students **not very much**. I remember going into that class and they said they don't read, **they just don't read**. I actually had this really weird experience the first few weeks of teaching I actually felt like I realised that they didn't think I could hear them when they were chatting and I was really thinking about this and I'd say come on, come on pay attention but I thought that they were actually **treating me like I was some kind of visual thing** the TV or something...and I think it because they're so used to this..TV kind of **passive**, you don't interact there's no dialogue you just watch this thing move around and when you're not interested you chat to a friend..I think the whole kind of being really passive, computer games, TV kind of culture I think it's really tangible in those **lower ability groups**"

William: "I expect them to read but I've no real belief that they will, they might read **consumer magazines** like Empire and Total Film but they **won't read anything beyond that.**"

Sue: "I did a questionnaire [for teacher training module] about what reading material they used and how they engaged with the reading materials on the course. Their answers, well the sensible ones, to what reading materials they read out of college, was adverts and magazines occasionally so they haven't engaged with any texts. Why haven't they? **Why have they got to 16, 17, 18, 19 without having engaged with books?**"

I revisited my literature review notes to find echoes of these assumptions and disappointments elsewhere. Writing about the recreational reading habits of his first year students at a U.S college Jude Gallik writes:

“When my colleagues and I interview prospective students, we always seem to ask about their reading habits. ‘Do you read for pleasure?’ We ask, hoping for the ‘yes’ that we think will reveal an interest in matters academic and thereby portend future collegial success. We ask this question over and over, year after year, because we assume that there is a relationship between reading and academic success: we believe that better students read more than poorer ones.’ (Gallik, 1999, P480)

In his study Gallik found no connection between pleasure reading in term time and academic achievement and only a weak correlation for vacation reading and achievement. A majority of students stated that they would read more if they had more time but only a minority actually increased their recreational reading during vacation time. Nevertheless Gallik takes comfort in finding that a high percentage of students expressed a positive attitude towards reading.

Gallik’s feelings here are interesting because they suggest at something about why teachers want students to read, it is as much, perhaps more, a *feeling about* reading books than any ‘knowns’ or ‘provens’ about the relationship between recreational book reading and academic success.

There are a number of ideas at play here about “subject English” (Peim, 1993) and the wider literacy curriculum, and how discursive constructions of what it means to read and be a reader are mediated and organised within an educational, and wider social, setting.

In the above accounts readers are clearly being defined through the texts they associate themselves with. Teacher, or culturally dominant as signified by the TES, preferred texts are primarily ‘print based’, academic or literary, and clear distinctions are drawn between those that have intrinsic worth and value – in other parts of her narrative about her students as readers new teacher Sue calls them “texts with beauty” (Kendall et al, 2002) – and other texts, magazines and TV. Notably texts that fall into the latter category are often

those that students self-select. Texts in the former category are perceived to make demands on the reader and thus are associated with interactivity, achievement and self-development. Texts in the latter category, by contrast, are associated with student passivity and lower status activities, not reading so much as 'viewing' or 'consuming'.

Within this set of relations teachers seem to be caught up in a process of 'othering' (Atkinson, 2004) with students often constituted as in 'deficit' the defining 'other' to the 'professional, educated us' to whom Passmore's article was so clearly directed, the same 'us' invited to share in her disappointments.

Interaction with text in this set of understandings is defined by the nature and or medium of the text one engages with, interacting with literature is reading, interacting with a magazine consuming, interacting with film or TV viewing. Thus it is the text, and the cultural and social status imbued upon it that dictates how these teachers understand the process of engaging with it. The text is given a set of pre-existing, fixed, meanings that the reader, consumer or viewer taps into. Such understandings sit with the structuralist (Saussure, 1974) account of reading, outlined above, that conceives a 'transmission' model of reading also resonant perhaps of a structuralist model of understanding reading. Valid reading is thus less the process of engaging with text *per se* but an activity associated with particular *kinds* of artefact/text, whether or not one is said to be 'reading' is dependent upon the object of one's gaze.

Within this set of understandings some texts, and the act of engaging with them, are valorised and reified, whilst others are rejected. The good reader, like the good learner (Avis, Bathmaker & Kendall, 2002, Avis et al: 2001; Lawn, 1988) is bound to and referenced from teacher's notions about learning through which their own identities as learners and academics are interwoven and managed. Where the good learner is characterised by 'their relationship to their chosen subject or discipline' their 'commitment', through being 'academically gifted', 'independent' and 'motivated' (Avis et al, 2001: 13) so the good reader resonates with the teachers' own understandings of the

legitimised practice. Here new teacher Carole (Kendall et al; 2002) seems to speak the validated other to Passmore's reading of students as readers:

Carole: 'Yeah, I just love reading, not just literature but I love reading the Sunday papers, I just love, if I lost my eyesight and I had to read through braille it would be so difficult because I know it's so limiting so yeah I mean if I had more money...I just, I think there's certain stages when I've gone for certain books I mean I went through a whole psychology phase in my teens when I was trying to work out my own whatever, work out my own personal angst through reading psychology books. I'm quite spiritual so I read loads and loads of things on eastern spiritual philosophy.'

Avis et al also found that FE lecturers "offered liberal humanist understanding[s] of education in which getting an education is in itself of intrinsic value...education is closely associated with identity and an affinity with an interest in a particular subject." (Ibid. 13)

Young people may often then, find themselves in educational contexts within which a fairly pervasive set of discursive constructions exists about how they should 'be' as readers and the terms on which they are expected to participate in a literacy curriculum. There exists an implicit understanding that particular kinds of leisure reading are a vital, *although extra-curricula and untaught*, complement to the pedagogic process and there are clear tensions about reading cultures, interests and meanings around texts between young people and the professional and institutional understandings with which they come into contact.

Bourdieu's (1992, 2002) thesis of 'distinction' and Bernstein's notion of 'recognition and realisation' (Bernstein, 2000) are used here to think through the ways in which 'teachers' and the educational institutions within which they participate might function to understand and reproduce particular values about reading and readers and in doing so create the "conditions of possibility" (Foucault in Kendall and Wickham: 1999: 37) that make the quotes above 'sayable'.

Distinction

Bourdieu argues that texts are cultural artefacts which operate within an economy of 'symbolic exchange' That is to say that as cultural objects, texts have 'value' defined in terms of both their context of production *and* the nature of the discursive social/cultural trajectories through which they are 'reflexively mobilised' (Gauntlett, 2002) by agents and institutions towards the management of self and the exercising of power. Texts in this sense are understood as signifiers, as material and visible sites around and upon which discursivities are structured/imposed and thus enact and perform power relations through a process of 'orchestrated transformation.' Texts as "cultural objects operate for Bourdieu within their own economy of symbolic value" (Colebrook 1997:103) functioning as currency within markets of social, cultural and capital exchange.

Markets are characterised as micro, that is to say locally socially and historically situated and "differ as to what they accord value to, there can be no general description of symbolic exchange without considering its particular divisions (class, tribal, ethnic, political) and values (honour, display, power, aesthetics)," (Colebrook 1997:103). Colebrook goes on to argue that an exploration of the market, of the kind that Bourdieu undertakes in *Distinction* (1990) makes it possible to explore "how specific literary texts create aesthetic boundaries and how these boundaries relate to other forms of social power." (*Ibid.* 91)

Bourdieu identifies educational institutions as 'sites' that occupy a 'state of domination' (Foucault, 2000:283) within the discursive market. That is to say that through the enactment of their specific practices and their 'rite/right to speak value – a right acquired through a long term strategic, political and historical positioning within relations of power – educational institutions claim a rite/right to name the legitimate both within the boundaries of the specialists fields and beyond. They have a key role in determining and setting the value of the signifier through 'rite' of a particular and strategic historical positioning within relations of power. Thus within a particular field and beyond:

The family and the school function as sites in which the competences deemed necessary at a given time are constituted by usage itself, and, simultaneously, as sites in which the *price* of those competences is determined, i.e. as markets which, by their positive or negative sanctions, evaluate performance, reinforcing what is acceptable, discouraging what is not, condemning valueless dispositions to extinction. In other words, the acquisition of cultural competence is inseparable from insensible acquisition of 'sense' for sound cultural investment. (Bourdieu, 2002: 85)

Through a 'game' of 'continuous creation' (Bourdieu, 1992:58) educational institutions compete for the 'monopolistic power' within the 'field of specialised production' to impose *recognition* of the 'legitimised mode of expression' (ibid). Thus Bourdieu sees the school, or in this case college, as constantly producing and reproducing the game, not just within the institutional stakeholders but the wider cultural nexus within which it participates/is situated:

the struggle tends constantly to produce and reproduce the game and its stakes by reproducing, primarily in those who are directly involved, but not in them alone, the practical commitment to the value of the game and its stake which defines the recognition of legitimacy. (Bourdieu 1992:58)

This perpetual play is a condition of possibility for the imposition and recognition of legitimate position taking and the cultural artefacts that signify it:

What would become of the literary world if one began to argue, not about the value of this or that author's style but about the value of the argument about style? The game is over when people start wondering if the cake is worth the candle. (Bourdieu 1992: 58)

Thus institutions and the discourses they seek to valorise are caught in the ceaseless bind of a hegemonising process:

...the hegemonic is not necessarily what everyone practices, nor what everyone believes in. Hegemony is not dominant ideology saturating the whole formation; winning consent is not necessarily agreement. Rather the hegemonic is that for which 'there is no alternative'. Hegemonic discourses operate in part by attacking or marginalising other ways of living, which, locally, may be quite developed. (Johnson, 1998:90)

Through this lens reading 'choice' is always already meaningful in terms of the systems of cultural exchange within which it functions and operates:

Certain texts, and ways of reading those texts, do not have a monetary value. But they have a value in so far as they embody a principle of aesthetic autonomy, which is no less culturally-determined or valued. It depends upon valorising certain authors...certain ways of reading...as well as the positions of those who confer certain values. (Colebrook, 1997:107)

Bourdieu refers to this process of legitimisation of cultural objects as 'consecration' (Bourdieu cited in Colebrook, 1997: 107). Through the imposition of curricula, and its resultant processes of curriculum selection and de-selection, the school or college can therefore be seen to be active and influential in the process of consecration; "the educational system defines non-curricular culture (la culture 'libre'), negatively at least, by delimiting, within dominant culture, the area of what it puts into its syllabuses and controls by its examinations," (Bourdieu 2002:23) and through the technologies of curricula, Marx for example argues of the examination that it "is nothing but the bureaucratic baptism of knowledge, the official recognition of the transubstantiation of profane knowledge into sacred knowledge" (Marx, K. cited in Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 92):

Certain texts are continually performed, re-read and interpreted; while the texts have a certain symbolic power it is also the case that by *recognising* that power the reader or critic also benefits. The act of writing a book about Shakespeare continues the 'Shakespeare industry' and gains a benefit from that industry. But this 'industry', in addition to its financial features, also relies upon a continual demonstration of profitlessness: Shakespeare is valuable *because* the plays are more than commodities. (Colebrook, 1997: 98)

Thus consumption of and association of oneself with 'consecrated' texts yields a profit of distinction "the more legitimate a given area, the more necessary and 'profitable' it is to be competent in it, and the more damaging and 'costly' to be incompetent," (Bourdieu 1992: 86):

The hierarchy of 'average' rates of profit broadly corresponds to the hierarchy of degrees of legitimacy, so that knowledge of classical or

even avant-garde literature yields higher 'average' profits, in the scholastic market and elsewhere, than knowledge of cinema, or, a fortiori, strip cartoons, detective stories or sport. But the *specific* profits, and the consequent propensities to invest, are only defined in the relationship between a field and a particular agent with particular characteristics. For example, those who owe most of their cultural capital to the education system, such as primary and secondary teachers originating from the working and middle classes, are particularly subject to the academic definition of legitimacy, and tend to proportion their investments very strictly to the value the educational system sets on the different areas. (Bourdieu 2002: 87)

Thus the maximisation of profit within educational institutions is gained through recognition of, admiration for and conspicuous or implied consumption of the highest status texts, that is to say the evolution of a "disposition to *recognise* legitimate works, a propensity and capacity to recognise their legitimacy and perceive them as worthy of admiration in themselves legitimate positions within that institution" (Bourdieu, 2002: 26).

With regard to reading and college students, success or competence (achievement) as a reader will be understood in terms of a general acceptance and internalisation of institutional positions, which texts have value which don't, which reading practices have value and which don't. Texts falling outside the authority of curricula become other to the discourse of legitimacy:

Illegitimate extra-curricular culture, whether it be the knowledge accumulated by the self-taught or the 'experience' acquired in and through practice, outside the control of the institution specifically mandated to inculcate it and officially sanction its acquisition, like the art of cooking or herbal medicine...is only valorised to the strict extent of its technical efficiency, without any social or added-value, and is exposed to legal sanctions (like the illegal practice of medicine) whenever it emerges from the domestic universe to compete with authorised competences. (Bourdieu, 2002: 25)

The 'habitus' of teachers and students, where habitus is understood as 'social inheritance' (Grenfell and James, 1998:16), are through virtue of their qualifications, experience and differing relationships with the curriculum (designers and consumers) differently situated within the 'field' of institutional meanings about reading and thus are differently positioned in their

potential/capacities to draw down real and potential profits. Teachers and students are seen as “individuals (with particular social, scholastic and academic habitus) positioned in fields which structure the representations of their products.” (Grenfell and James, 1998:176). This would be especially the case were it to be so that further education teachers, as Bourdieu asserts of their counterparts in primary and secondary education, “owe most of their cultural capital to the education system” and are therefore “particularly subject to the academic definition of legitimacy, and tend to proportion their investments very strictly to the value the educational system sets on the different areas” (Bourdieu 2002: 87). Teachers “feel as fish in water” when experiencing and participating in institutional understandings of reading and readers, “when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself ‘as a fish in water’, it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted” (Bourdieu in interview with Wacquant in Bourdieu, 1989:43).

Furthermore through a process which Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic imposition’, teachers’ qualifications stand in for what is real or knowable about their skills or competence as readers, profit is granted automatically in lieu of the qualifications which grant them the statutory right to teach and to legitimately assume the role of teacher within an educational institution:

...it is written in to the tacit definition of the academic qualification *formally* guaranteeing a specific competence (like an engineering diploma) that it *really* guarantees possession of a ‘general culture’ whose breadth is proportionate to the prestige of the qualification; and, conversely, that no real guarantee may be sought of what it guarantees formally and really or, to put it another way, of the extent to which it guarantees what it guarantees. (Bourdieu 2002: 25)

Thus whilst teachers and lecturers may *choose* to invest in the legitimate cultures of the institution they are not *compelled* to in order to ensure for themselves a capital benefit, to which they are entitled by the fact of their employment as teacher or lecturer.

Bourdieu’s arguments offer a means of understanding firstly why it might be that students’ reading habits are a legitimate subject for conversation and

secondly why student reading habits which deviate from the cultural norms of the institution/field might be a rightful and 'legitimate' cause for concern by professionals practising within and according to the legitimate understandings of the institutional field. Bourdieu argues that the "official differences produced by academic classifications tend to produce (or reinforce) real differences by inducing in the classified individuals a collectively recognised and supported belief in the differences, thus producing behaviours that are intended to bring real beings into line with the official being." (2002:25) Therefore the extra-curricular reading interests of students are (and in these terms can only be?) valorised only in a performative sense, Bourdieu uses the phrase 'legitimate autodidacticism' to express:

...the difference in kind between the highly valued 'extra-curricular' culture of the holder of academic qualifications and the illegitimate extra-curricular culture of the autodidact. The reader of the popular science monthly *Science et Vie* who talks about the genetic code or the incest taboo exposes himself to ridicule as soon as he ventures outside the circle of his peers, whereas Claude Levi-Strauss or Jacques Monod can only derive additional prestige from their excursions into the field of popular music or philosophy. (Bourdieu 2002:24)

Thus, Apple argues:

There is, then, always a *politics* of 'official' knowledge, a politics that embodies conflict over what some regard as simply neutral descriptions of the world and what others regard as elite conceptions that empower some groups while disempowering others. (1996:23)

Making sense – the pedagogic code

Whilst readings of Bourdieu offer useful ways of thinking through educational institutions as brokers of wider social and cultural symbolic value/s this theory of symbolic exchange offers no reflexive account of the internal workings of the pedagogic discourse through which value is *actually* produced, reproduced, distributed and exchanged. Thus working through Bourdieu's notion of distinction affords an understanding of the relationship between the 'inside' and 'outside' of educational institutions in terms of symbolic currency, the inner workings of the pedagogic discourse which transacts and enacts

these relationships is less fully explored. This is a key contention of Bernstein who argues that:

the major theories of cultural reproduction which we have, essentially of the Parisian version, are limited by their assumptions and focus, and so are unable to provide strong principles of description of pedagogic agencies, of their discourses, of their pedagogic practices.” (Bernstein 2000:4)

Bernstein argues that what is further needed is analysis of the internal workings and inner logic of the pedagogic ‘text’, “how it has been put together, the rules of its construction, circulation, contextualisation, acquisition and change” (2000:4) and is concerned to address how “power and control translate into principles of communication, and how these principles of communication differentially regulate forms of consciousness with respect to their reproduction and the possibilities of change” (2000:4). To this end Bernstein proposes a ‘pedagogic code’ which is intended to facilitate the thinking through of pedagogic processes through the recovery of macro relations from the micro interactions of pedagogic practice (2000:5)

‘Power’ for Bernstein is the power relations which “create boundaries, legitimise boundaries, reproduce boundaries, between different categories of groups, gender, class, race, different categories of discourse, different categories of agents.’ (2000:5) Power is seen to ‘punctuate’ social space always operating to ‘produce dislocations’ and to establish ‘legitimate relations of order’ (ibid); power enables and enacts separateness and distinction. Where power creates categories, ‘control’ relations function to establish different forms of communication within categories.

Relations between categories are examined through the concept of ‘classification’. Classification is the concept through which power is translated and accounts for the spaces *between* categories rather than the qualities or attributes which define or characterise a category. Bernstein argues that “the crucial space which creates the specialisation of the category...is not internal to that discourse but is the space between that discourse and another. In

other words, A can only be A if it can effectively insulate itself from B. In this sense there is no A if there is no relationship between A and something else" (2000:6). Within this set of understandings it is the disjunction, the disruption, which 'insulates' categories in other words it is the "silence which carries the message of power"(ibid.). The degree of 'Insulation' between categories, Bernstein argues, determines the degree of classification, weak or strong, and precipitates thereby less or more specialised 'discourses', 'identities' and 'voices'(Ibid. 7):

We can say, then, that the insulation which creates the principle of classification has two functions: one external to the individual, which regulates the relations between individuals, and another function which regulates relations within the individual. So insulation faces outward to the social order and inwards to the order within the individual. (Ibid. 7)

Thus the act of positive definition of a category is always an act of suppression of the "unthinkable, the yet to be voiced" (ibid. 7) and categories are, and must, be sustained through a process of constant creation, "although classification translates power into the voice to be reproduced...the contradictions, cleavages and dilemmas which inhere in the principles of classification are never entirely suppressed, either at the social or individual level. (2002:15). For Bernstein this instability is crucial to the dynamics of his pedagogic code, the ever presence and possibility, the trace, of the 'unthinkable' central to a notion of change, it is the possibilities of diversion that enable the 'elaboration' or 'change' that is at the heart of Bernstein's understanding of the pedagogic code and additionally what makes Bernstein's ideas interesting to the feminist post-structuralist reader. Below I will aim to make visible the ways in which subjects and agents labour towards (knowingly or not) the project of insulation and in so doing manage their own sense of self and in turn are managed by the elaborated code in a symbiotic relationship that sustains the conditions of possibility of the elaborated code regimes of 'truth' that it manifests.

Where classification constructs the 'stratifications, distributions and locations' (ibid. 12) of social space the concept of 'framing' enables analysis of "the

different forms of communication realised in any pedagogic practice”(ibid. 12). Framing prescribes and mandates relations within a context, “framing is about who controls what” and “refers to the nature of the control over: the selection of the communication; its sequencing (what comes first, what comes second); its pacing (the rate of expected acquisition); the criteria; and the control over the social base which makes the transmission possible” (ibid. 13)

Both concepts of ‘classification’ and ‘framing’ can have an external value and an internal value. Because it is concerned with relations classification always has an external value (ibid. 14) but it can also have an internal value which consigns and orientates use of space and objects, Bernstein offers the ‘classroom space’ as an example of strong internal classification. In the same way framing can have an external or internal value. The external value of framing operates to index communication within the pedagogic practice to controls on communications outside the pedagogic practice, thus the external value of framing “can strip you of your identity and biography outside that context or it can include it...where the external framing is strong, it often means that the images, voices and practices the school reflects make it difficult for children of marginalised classes to recognise themselves in the school.” (Ibid. 14).

This identification and labelling of parts enables Bernstein to write the ‘grammar’ of pedagogic practice (Bernstein, 2000:15)

$$\begin{array}{c} E \\ \hline C \quad / \quad F \end{array}$$

This enables a representation of the ways in which changes to the value/s of framing and classification “produce different modalities of elaborated

codes”(ibid. 15). This visible, relational representation of the possibility of change is crucial to Bernstein’s endeavour:

as Cs and Fs change in values, from strong to weak, then there are changes in organisational practices, changes in discursive practices, changes in transmission practices, changes in psychic defences, changes in concept of the teacher, changes in the concepts of the pupils, changes in the concepts of knowledge itself, and changes in the forms of expected pedagogic consciousness (2000:15).

Whilst this enables an understanding of the production of the pedagogic text, it is participation in the rules of ‘recognition’ and ‘realisation’ that enable the acquirer, argues Bernstein, to speak the text – to become less ‘other’. Rules of recognition enable the recognition of ‘the speciality of the context’ (ibid. 17) within which one finds oneself and inevitably subjects are situated to and by the rules according to their particular social inheritance:

the classificatory principle at the level of the individual creates recognition rules whereby the subject can orientate to the special features which distinguish the context. The classificatory principle regulates recognition rules, recognition rules refer to power relations. Certain distributions of power give rise to different social distributions of recognition rules and, without the recognition rule, contextually legitimate communication is not possible. It may well be, at the more concrete level, that some children from marginal classes are silent at school because of an unequal distribution of recognition rules: power classification and recognition rules. Power is never more fundamental as far as communication is concerned than when it acts on the distribution of recognition rules” (ibid. 17)

Acquisition of the recognition rules does not, however enable/facilitate or alone preclude production of legitimate texts, to ‘speak’ or make public legitimate meanings participants in the pedagogic discourse need to acquire realisation rules. Realisation rules are fundamental to ‘successful’ engagement with the pedagogic discourse:

Many children of the marginal classes may indeed have a recognition rule, that is, they can recognise the power relations in which they are involved, and their position in them, but they may not possess the realisation rule. If they do not possess the *realisation rule*, they cannot speak the expected legitimate text. These children in school, then will

not have acquired the legitimate pedagogic code, but they will have acquired their place in the classificatory system. For these children, the experience of school is essentially an experience of the classificatory system and their place in it.'(Ibid. 2000:17)

A Bernsteinian analysis of the policy and curricula documentation pertaining to reading and readers within the sixteen to nineteen context enable the performance of further sense-making about student reading habits in general and the reading habits survey in particular.

The elaborated code of the reading curriculum: literacy education as broker of symbolic capital

the legitimate language no more contains within itself the power to ensure its own perpetuation in time than it has the power to define its extension in space. Only the process of continuous creation, which occurs through the unceasing struggles between the different authorities who compete within the field of specialised production for the monopolistic power to impose the legitimate mode of expression, can ensure the permanence of the legitimate language and of its value, that is, of the recognition accorded to it. (Bourdieu, 1992: 55)

...the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein has demonstrated that the dominant society not only distributes materials and goods but also reproduces and distributes cultural capital, i.e. those systems of meanings, taste, dispositions, attitudes and norms that are directly and indirectly defined by the dominant society as socially legitimate. From this perspective, the reproduction of a society is intimately tied to the production and distribution of its cultural message. As such the cultural apparatus for reproducing the dominant culture and communicating it to the public becomes an important political issue (Giroux, 1989: 77)

Within the sixteen to nineteen curriculum, where curriculum is taken in its widest sense to mean “all the learning that goes on in school whether it is expressly planned and intended or is a by-product of our planning and/or practice” (Kelly, 1999: 5), reading in its widest sense is explicitly treated in a range of syllabus documents. Unlike in school students in Further Education colleges experience what I will call a more ‘fractured’, ‘portfolio-like’ curriculum, that is to say their curriculum is not underpinned by a central unifying framework such as the National Curriculum, and sixteen to nineteen

year olds may be studying within a number of frameworks conceived and designed by a range of differing, sometimes competing organisations such as awarding bodies, QCA and National Training Organisations, engendering a curriculum locus which is polymorphic and multilayered. To begin to speak about the symbolic market and elaborated code of reading, readers and text within this space, an exploration of the discourses about reading and readers articulated through and within curriculum documentation is essential. I have brought together a range of curriculum documentation which legislate for the sixteen to nineteen context and which explicitly relate to reading. The nature of the portfolio curriculum means that not all of these will have direct implications for all students, the adult literacy curriculum framework for example would only impact upon students over 18, however what I am aiming to explore is not the specific shape and ideology of particular courses but the voices and identities about reading and readers that their collective elaborated code constructs and 'permits' for students.

Scene 2

Archaeology

The documentation included in the analysis is as follows:

- National Curriculum Framework, KS4 English;
- QCA Key skills levels 1-3;
- A/S & A2 English Literature WJEAC;
- A/S & A2 English Literature OCR;
- GCSE English NEAB (Post-sixteen version);
- Adult National Curriculum Literacy;
- Guide to using the adult curriculum.

That reading features explicitly across the different kinds of educational product represented by each of these specifications suggests in Bernstein's terms that classification of reading within the sixteen to nineteen environment is 'weak'. Notions that the student will be a reader of some kind or other permeate the wider curriculum and discourses about reading and readers cut across disciplines and subjects in a horizontal movement. Reading then, would seem to constitute an 'open' category, a horizontal discursive space through which discussion might freely circulate: Bernstein conceives a "reordering of specialised differentiation...[which]...can provide a new social basis for consensus of interest and opposition" (Bernstein, 2000:11), however this apparent liberation and un-tethering of knowledge and pedagogic knowledge is tempered by the answer to Bernstein's key question "we have to ask, in whose interest is the new togetherness and integration?" (Ibid.). Answering this question demands an understanding of 'framing' in this particular context where framing is understood, as discussed above, to articulate control relations. This necessitates an exploration of "who controls what...the selection of the communication; its sequencing (what comes first, what comes second); its pacing (the rate of expected acquisition); the criteria;

and the control over the social base which makes the transition possible” (ibid, 13).

All of these documents are intended to be read by teachers and lecturers and they function to determine the curriculum experience through prescription of mandatory aims, objectives and outcomes which are determined, disseminated and audited by a central government body, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority (QCDA). The hierarchical relationship between the regulator and the teacher/lecturer is articulated and exercised both explicitly and implicitly through the use of language throughout these documents. We have shown elsewhere (Kendall, 2005, McDougall et al 2006) The use of overt and sustained use of regulatory and prohibitive modals can be seen as an explicit linguistic technology through which the relationship between regulator and regulated is constructed and exercised:

Key skills (all levels) prescribe 'what you **must** do' 'what you **need** to do' (QCA, 2000)

the internally assessed assignment **must** involve an exploration of the relationships and comparisons between **two** suitable texts (at least one of which **must** be prose (WJEC, 2000, p11)

Texts in translation are **explicitly excluded** from the core requirements of the QCA Subject Criteria for Eng Lit. However students may discuss such texts as part of their wider reading. (OCR, 2000: 9)

The range of reading assessed **must cover the requirements exemplified** in Paragraph 1 of the **Programmes of Study for Key Stages 3 and 4** in *English in the National Curriculum* (1999). It **must** cover the following...(NEAB, 2003)

Whereas the inclusion of a glossary of terms in the guide to using the adult curriculum, might be described as a more implicit technology seeking to constitute a structuralist understanding of language within which meanings are fixed and knowable and the relationship between the ‘transmitter’ and ‘receiver’ of knowledge is hierarchically organised. The enactment of a glossary plays out this model, denying the fluidity of the relationship between the signifier and signified (Belsey & Moore 1985) through an attempt to fix and

specify meaning. In these terms the shift in nomenclature in 2000, under the sixteen to nineteen curriculum 2000 project, from 'syllabus' to 'subject specifications' for level 3 courses takes on a new significance as is newly conceived as 'in receipt' of that which has been 'specified'. The 'old' term 'syllabus', still retained in the yet to be reformed GCSE, carried the possibility of teacher as 'interpreter', 'reader' with the attendant associations of possibility; teacher as source of and resource for meaning-making for curriculum. Thus we observe already a model of reading implicit to the sixteen to nineteen curriculum model which tends to understand the reader (teacher/lecturer) as a decoder of a fixed set of meanings prescribed by the sender (regulator – QCA, Awarding body etc).

Also significant is the conspicuous inter-textuality evident in some of the documentation, with the authority of 'the message' being expressly associated, intertwined and contingent with its relationship to other 'official' messages. Note for example the deferential linkage of the NEAB requirements to other 'official' documentation as fixed meanings are further anchored to other fixed meanings in a bid to secure the common sense of claims and the acquiescence of the reader, at the same time this inter-textual scaffolding works to obscure and conceal the manufacturing of curriculum 'truth' through the imposition of a structuralist model of text and reader. Together these sustained and overt attempts to control the language, and thus the meanings, of curriculum speak the 'insulation' which Bernstein conceives as the 'fabric' of the boundary between categories, the preservative that enables the possibility of category. In this case however 'category' defines not the inside and outside of subjects and disciplines within the institution but the inside and outside of the institution and the possibilities of meaning within.

The 'how to' and 'what to' read are clearly established within the horizontal discourse/s about curriculum these documents conceive. Authors, texts and readers are seen as fulfilling particular kinds of roles, behaving in particular kinds of ways and having particular kinds of validities, the latter is particularly so in the case of texts. Peim's (1993) proposed starting point for 'opening a

discourse' about reading is useful for exploring both 'values' and 'ethics' about reading, readers and texts within the sixteen to nineteen curriculum context.

Peim (1993: 71) suggests asking:

1. How is reading learned?
2. What different kinds of reading are there?
3. What is reading?
4. What is reading for?
5. What is a good reader?
6. What kind of reading is done in [college]?

I intend to use these questions as a general means of structuring an analysis of the 'framing' of reading and readers within the elaborated code of the sixteen to nineteen curriculum as represented by this collection of documents.

What is reading in the curriculum?

The ability to read is as important today as it ever was. Some people believe that the need for good basic skills has lessened as technology has improved, that television, with all its power and indeed its role in providing information, has reduced the need for reading. Certainly there are many people who don't buy books for pleasure and enjoyment, and some who rarely read a newspaper or visit a library. In some ways this may not really matter. Being able to read fluently is very different from wanting to read at all.

(from the introduction to the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum entitled '*Reading Matters*', Basic Skills Agency, 2001:54)

Here the reading that the curriculum is to offer is unequivocally linked to the practices and necessities of the 'outside' or 'external' spaces of the institution, there is also a hint at the perceived commodity value of literacy which, as discussed above, some writers (Sanguinetti 2001 and Gee 2000) argue to be at the heart of current educational policy on literacy. The narrative voice distances itself from those who may not believe or understand the need for good basic skills constructing and claiming an authoritative position as 'one who knows best'. The tone of 'in some ways this may not really matter' is 'knowing', parental perhaps. The authorial voice understands that learners

may choose or prefer not to read but simultaneously insinuates a value judgement about such a choice which the reader (teacher) is invited to share. Equally this kind of choice is one that the authorial voice (and again the teacher?) distinguishes his/herself from. Reading is carefully distinguished from other activities such as the catch all 'technology' or watching television and the mention of book buying, newspaper reading and visiting the library serve to acknowledge to establish a sense of significance for and value to these activities. This outlines the key strands which form the foci of the reading curriculum: acquisition of the ability to read in a technical sense which includes acquisition of a model of language and a framework for making and taking meaning; knowledge about 'appropriate' reader/ing identities and *what to use reading for* in the sense of the values and meanings associated with different types of reading.

The curriculum conceives, particularly at the 'lower' levels a highly performative, technicist model of reading which falls neatly into the 'literacy ladder' notion of competence and acquisition discussed earlier: at level 1 reading is conceived as the technical ability to operate successfully at the graphemic, phonological and morphemic levels in order to make meanings from written material, this means the student 'must' be able to:

Read and obtain information from two different types of documents about straightforward subjects, including at least one image; read relevant material; identify accurately the main points and ideas in material and use the information to suit your purpose (Key Skills Communication C1.2, QCA, 2000)

- Trace and understand the main events of continuous descriptive, explanatory and persuasive texts
- Recognise how language and other textual features are used to achieve different purposes (e.g. to instruct, explain, describe, persuade)
- Identify the main points and specific detail and infer meaning from images which is not explicit in the text
- Use organisational and structural features to locate information
- Use different reading strategies to find and obtain information (Reading comprehension, level 1, Basic Skills Agency, 2001: 82)

Meaning-making revolves around an essentially structuralist model of language which conceives of the reader as a consumer of pre-established sets of meanings. Meaning is seen as being determined through an understanding of 'author' and 'context':

Select and read relevant material, 2. Identify accurately the lines of reasoning and main points from texts and images 3. Summarise the information to suit your purposes (Key skills Communication C2.2 .1. QCA, 2000)

Reading for meaning - evaluate their own critical writing about texts; comment on the authorial perspectives offered in texts on individuals, community and society in texts from different cultures, compare the presentations of ideas, values or emotions in related or contrasting texts, analyse how media texts influence and are influenced by readers e.g. interactive programmes, selection of news items (KS4, 2003)

the actual [teacher set] task should steer candidates towards a consideration of how texts are written, how characters are created or how themes are presented (WJEC, 2000:27)

within their responses candidates will be expected to show understanding of ways in which form, structure and language shape meaning. In response to the second question...candidates will be expected to articulate independent opinions and show understanding of the contexts in which their chosen play was written and understood (WJEC, 2000: 8)

Candidates must demonstrate their ability to - read with insight and engagement, making appropriate references to texts and developing and sustaining interpretations of them - distinguish between fact and opinion and evaluate how information is presented - follow an argument, identifying implications and recognising inconsistencies - select material appropriate to their purpose, collate material from different sources, make cross references - understand and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects, and comment on ways language varies and changes (Assessment objectives Reading (EN2): NEAB, 2000)

The 'candidate's' success within these terms is dependent upon an ability to make appropriate 'interpretations' about the already present, the text is taken as 'knowable' and it is how the student uses what they come to know about a given text that enables the teacher or assessor to make judgements about their ability as readers.

communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression (WJEC A/S, A AO1)

Genres and text types, expressed through form, structure, style are seen to 'carry' particular messages and ideas that enable the reader to reconstruct meaning, reading thus becomes an act of reproduction of pre-existing ideas about form, structure and style and no spaces are created for reading more reflexively or politically (Belsey and Moore, 1985) or to re-think language usage through the kinds of ideas advocated by Bakhtin's notion of the 'dialogic' (1981) or Kress' notion of transformative grammar (2000). Both latter writers, in contrast to a curriculum of rules and givens, conceive of language users as always already involved in a dynamic relationship with the language, the centripetal/centrifugal dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981) that sees users of language at once working within the limits of language and struggling to extend its boundaries. Kress illustrates this as lived experience:

when a child of three, struggling up a steep grassy slope, says: "that's a heavy hill", the child is not simply "acquiring" a new term, *heavy*; or, in another approach to this example, 'just making a mistake'. Rather, the child is shaping for himself the potential uses of 'heavy'. He uses the resources which he has available to him (he does not know the word 'steep' at this stage) to express the meaning: 'it takes real effort to get up this hill!' The best available word-resource he has at that point is the word 'heavy', and so it serves the purpose which he has. I want to say that this is not an unusual, or a merely childish example, but that it is the way in which language is learned, always, and meaning is made, always (Kress, 2000: 6)

It would seem that the work of both Kress and Bakhtin might be understood to harness a radicalising impulse that recognises the entitlement of language users to claim, as 'rite' and entitlement, possession of language in the way that Street (2001:19) would have it - see page 241 for further discussion of this point.

What is reading for?

As students move up the 'ladder' of competence the notion of 'enrichment' becomes a more visible tenet of the reading curriculum, this is clearly and specifically related to a notion of 'heritage':

4 the chief aim of these OCR specification is to enable candidates to **enjoy the study of literature**

OCR A/S A4 'to **appreciate the significance** of cultural and historical influences upon readers and writers'

W7To encourage candidates to develop their interest and enjoyment in literary studies through reading widely, independently and critically. The course will involve **an introduction to the traditions of English literature** and wider reading which could include lit in English from outside the UK and lit in translation

Study of Literary Texts - review and develop their own reading skills, experiences and preferences, analyse the language, form and dramatic impact of scenes and plays published by dramatists; extend their **understanding of literary heritage** by relating major writers to their historical context, and explaining their appeal over time; analyse ways in which different cultural contexts and traditions have influenced language and style, e.g. black British poetry, Irish short stories KS4

Reading in the 'English Literary Heritage' is a central 'entitlement' of the Key Stage 4, GCSE, A/S and A level documentation. What counts as heritage is communicated through book lists, prescription of texts and the 'order' and the requirement for students to engage with particular genres, writers, historical moments and cultural movements is explicit:

During the key stage, pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through the following ranges of literature and non-fiction and non-literary texts. Literature the range **should include a) plays, novels, short stories and poetry from the English literary heritage**, including examples of major..... i two plays by **Shakespeare**, one of which should be studied in KS3 ii drama by **major playwrights** iii works of fiction by two **major writers** published before 1914 selected from the first list in the right hand frame iv two works of fiction by **major writers published after 1914** v poetry by four major poets published before 1914 **selected from the list** in the right hand frame vi poetry by four

major poets published after 1914 b) recent and contemporary drama, fiction and poetry written for young people and adults c) drama fiction and poetry by major writers from different cultures and traditions.(KS4?????)

Each unit...offers a choice of texts for study. Consideration has been given to offering a wide range, including texts that have a Welsh dimension, in the two internally assessed options, **centres are invited to nominate their own texts for study following the guidelines** printed in this specification. (WJEC, 2000: 5)

A key characteristic of 'included' texts is their origin, both in terms of historical context and authoring. The specifications identify 'major authors' and key time periods for drawing limits on and parameters around students' required, 'legitimate' reading. Where independent choices are to be made about what to study it is 'centres' (teachers and lecturers) rather than students who are invited to elect titles and 'guidelines' are published to facilitate and 'support' the decision making process. This communicates implicitly that which is articulated more explicitly at KS4, that:

Pupils should be taught: the characteristics of texts that are considered to be of high quality [and] the appeal and importance of these texts over time (DfES, 2003)

The use of the passive here serves to deflect the clarity of 'who' might be effecting the consideration of quality, distancing the reader from the source of the authority from which the assertion takes reference. There is an appeal to the 'common sense' of high quality texts to which it is assumed the teacher-reader will be both sympathetic and complicit. Grammatically and logically there is no licence for an oppositional viewpoint.

The reading curriculum asserts then, overtly and covertly, that texts can and should be understood in a hierarchy defined by 'quality and value'.

Colebrook's arguments, discussed above, are again directly applicable here:

certain texts, and ways of reading those texts, do not have a monetary value. But they have a value in so far as they embody a principle of aesthetic autonomy, which is no less culturally-determined or valued. It depends upon valorising certain authors...certain ways of reading...as well as the positions of those who confer certain values (1997:107)

The curriculum plays out Bourdieu's notion of 'perpetual play', constituting a locus at which 'legitimacy' – 'the game and its stakes' (1992:58) - is determined, and reproduced and the rules of the economy of symbolic exchange are simultaneously determined and reified. Inevitably and unavoidably reading choice is referenced and indexed to this and it is in these terms that Passmore's (2002) reading of the reading habits survey is possible, even perhaps inevitable. 'Legitimised form[s] of expression', in this case specifications determine which "competences [are] deemed necessary" (Bourdieu 2002:85) and the 'price' of those competencies. Thus the profits (the legitimate) and losses ("the illegitimate extra-curricular culture...the self-taught...or the experience acquired in and through practice" (Bourdieu, 2002: 25)) of the reading curriculum are clearly established. Bourdieu summarises thus:

The educational system defines non-curricular culture (la culture 'libre'), negatively at least, by delimiting, within dominant culture, the area of what it puts into its syllabuses and controls by its examinations. (Bourdieu, 2002: 23)

What is important in terms of the elaborated code here is that power is exercised both through and by the institution and we see a homology between the strong internal and strong external framing which effects a state of self-perpetuating hegemony.

The differences in emphasis between the ways in which this is played out in notions of the 'academic' reader and the 'vocational' reader also demands commentary. This difference is exemplified through a brief comparison of representations of reading in two of the level 2 documents, GCSE and the Adult Core Curriculum. Unlike the GCSE the Core Curriculum specifies no literary content for students yet the culture and values of 'enrichment' nevertheless pervade the specification document. A more subtle, 'softer' voice invites the teacher/lecturer to facilitate 'great leaps forward' through careful selection of reading material:

the texts used must include those relevant to the interests of the individual, but there must also be texts that enable the learner to apply new skills in new contexts - effectively to develop transferable skills. If this doesn't happen, they won't get any better at coping with literacy demands, because there won't be the cumulative learning that results in 'great leaps forward' (Basic Skills Agency, 2001).

This is complemented by:

some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention. (Francis Bacon (1561-1626) cited in the Adult Literacy Curriculum, Basic Skills Agency 2001: 55)

The decision to use Bacon links the curriculum to the same kinds of notion of heritage explicitly articulated in the KS4 and GCSE documents, whereby the 'voice' of a historical authorial figure is reified by presence and speaks a universal truth across decades and generations. The 'truth', in this case, is the assertion of the KS4 notion that some fewer texts are of intrinsically higher quality and are therefore of greater 'value' for/to the student so demand due 'diligence and attention'. What distinguishes the teacher from the student in this context is the cultural 'knowledge base' implicit to a notion of professionalism' which the teacher or lecturer will be able to draw upon to make selections that are 'meaningful' in these terms, thus facilitating the 'great leap forward' that can be understood purely in terms of (symbolic) capital gain.

In concluding this section, 'what is reading for?', I want to suggest that post 16 literacy curriculum constructs a binary through which vocationalism, and its literacies, becomes the 'feminised other' (see below for further discussion of this idea) to the preferred practices of the (masculine?) classroom.

How is reading learned in the sixteen to nineteen context?

Within this technicist model of curriculum students are encouraged, and rewarded, for learning to 'read' in the same way as they learn to acquire any other 'body of knowledge'. Reading is a 'key skill' to be acquired:

Adults should be taught to use different reading strategies to find and obtain information e.g. skimming, scanning, detailed reading (Basic Skills Agency, 2001: 92).

An identified body of knowledge, or set of (set) texts, worthy of consuming in specific kinds of ways:

Texts from different cultures and traditions: Pupils should be taught a) to understand the values and assumptions in the texts b) the significance of the subject matter and the language c) the distinctive qualities of literature from different traditions d) how familiar themes are explored in different cultural contexts e) to make connections and comparisons between texts from different cultures (KS4, 2003)

Reading as process, and understandings about what reading can or might be are absent from the 'specified' curriculum. Thus the possibilities of reading as intervention in or transformation of curriculum are equally absent and the relationship students are able to have with the curriculum is fixed, predictable and knowable: students are subject to rather than participant in curriculum. In Bernstein's (2000) terms this means that different students will recognise the curriculum differently as they bring their 'life-world' values to the fixed values of the classroom and find different kinds of 'fit' which in turn impacts upon their capacity and capability to recognise and realise the 'rules' and identities pervading the institutional space. For Bernstein as for Gee (2000) class is a key factor in shaping and determining this encounter. The teacher's role then becomes understandable in Zukas and Malcolm's (1999) terms as the 'psycho-diagnostician and facilitator of learning'. That is to say that the responsibility of the teacher/lecturer is to understand the student in terms of their deficit in relation to the desired identities and values implicit in the curriculum outcomes and to facilitate a 'fix'.

What is a good reader?

Understandings of a 'good reader' are embedded in the descriptions of a 'competent' reader. The descriptions for an A grade reader at level 3 afford a description of the reading 'identity' of a competent reader:

'Candidates demonstrate a comprehensive, detailed knowledge and understanding of a wider range of literary texts from past to the present, and of the critical concepts associated with literary study. (WJEC, 2000: 24)

The competent reader will know and understand a 'range' of texts, that is to say, will be able to make 'appropriate' judgements about genre, function and quality, and historical significance. Additionally the competent reader will be 'well read' in the 'critical concepts associated with literary study' which is to say they will be able to recognise that a body of knowledge called 'literary study' exists and will be 'confident' and competent with its content which will mean that:

Where appropriate, candidates [will be able to] identify the influence on texts of the cultural and historical contexts in which they were written. They are able to make significant and productive comparisons between texts, which enhance their readings (ibid: 24)

Competence demands a recognition and acceptance (internalisation?) of 'appropriacy' rules which in turn enable the reader the capacity to play out or 'realise' the rules in a new context. This 'game play' affords a suggestion at, or illusion of a creative process:

Their discussion of texts shows depth, independence and insight in response to the tasks set (ibid: 24)

but the student is always already subject to the rules of participation prescribed by the parameters of 'literary study':

The notion of a point of autonomy or 'independence', is central to an understanding of a competent reader as this is the point at which the student might be seen to be wholly inducted/immersed in the subject identity/ies represented by the rules of 'literary study'. At this point the 'baptism' is complete and the teacher as facilitator is no longer useful or necessary, the student has become a 'player', in Bernstein's terms, in his or her own right:

their material is well organised and presented, making effective use of textual evidence in support of arguments" (WJEC, 2000: 24)

and becomes 'entitled' to the award that confers this identity, an A grade at A level. In these terms becoming a reader is about 'recognising' what readers do with particular kinds and groups of texts and inculcating that behaviour, becoming a reader is learning to behave like a reader, or 'realising' the role/s that one has first recognized.

This 'product' model of education has been described as 'technological' (Print, 1993:46), that is to say behaviourist in orientation whereby autonomy is not expressed in terms of pedagogy but through consumer choice: students exercise their choices over the courses/modules, and the different values and status they are representative of, in the market. Within such a model teachers 'guide' students through which commodity to choose and facilitate progression. Thus constructions of reading and reader identity are 'received' and by necessity must be reproduced in order to meet appropriate, predetermined performance outputs.

It is possible to say therefore that the 'who controls what' of knowledge construction and selection, and more fundamentally the shaping of notions of 'knowledge' itself, is clearly and quickly established within the sixteen to nineteen curriculum about reading and readers through the key distinctions in role between curriculum designers and planners (authorities and bodies) and curriculum delivers (teachers and lecturers) and the nature of the relationship constructed and exercised between the two.

Expressing concern and establishing priorities: re-reading the reading habits survey

If as Paechter describes:

what happens in the school curriculum is fundamental to people's lives. Schools are meant to educate the next generation, and to do so through the curriculum. If the curriculum excludes or marginalizes some groups or discounts their ideas, it will make it harder for members of those groups to benefit from the education system (2000: 1)

then the ideas of Bourdieu and Bernstein coupled with the findings of the reading habits survey above pose crucial questions about social justice for

teachers in Black Country FE settings and implicate them in the need to seriously revise and refine pedagogical practice. If, as the survey findings seem to suggest, home language is a crucial factor in determining patterns of reading outside college and that where English is not the home language students may be more likely to engage in leisure pursuits, watching films, reading on the internet and playing on the computer, that do not only not help them to recognise and realise the preferred identities of the literacy curricula but that are defined by that same curricula, and by those (and for Bourdieu teachers are a group likely to demonstrate this behaviour) who index 'taste' to that curricula, as the valueless 'other', then clearly teachers are faced with a conundrum: what does an inclusive curriculum mean? That students have a right to access? That students have a right to participate? Or that the curriculum itself must transform in more fundamental ways? Before attempting a response I'd like to listen again to the voices of the respondents in this study.

Scene 3

Acts of recognition, realisation and resistance, the 3Rs: students playing within and without the elaborated code

As part of my original research design I had intended to begin the process of triangulating the reading habits survey findings by subjecting the results to the scrutiny of the target population. I continued with this next step, but no longer with the purpose of triangulating but because I was interested in the students as a group of 'readers' of the data alongside the TES and the comments from teachers drawn from my earliest data collection and other research projects that I'd been involved with. I took the results of the reading survey to seven small groups, between three and five students in each group, of sixteen to nineteen year olds studying in one of the colleges participating in the survey. Twenty three students in total were involved in this aspect of the study. Students were self-selecting but drawn from 2 A level, 2 GCSE and 1 wordpower group. The five groups were each taught by two tutors and all members of the English department at the college were involved in teaching the five groups. In a semi-structured interview participants were asked 21 questions. They were asked to comment on the statistical findings of the reading habits survey, to consider the comments made by Passmore in the TES and to discuss questions about reader identities more generally (see Appendix 6).

Orientating thoughts

What became quite apparent from these discussions is that whilst theories of reproduction seemed to offer adequate ways of describing curriculum 'intent' they proved insufficient in enabling effective theorisation of the ways in which students choose to realise or not institutionally preferred identities. What I found rather is that students chose often to 'resist' those identities. This resistance offers a further important way of interrogating the results of the

reading habits survey – are students ‘left’ out or are they ‘opting out’? Is it the job of teachers to ‘open access’ ‘integrate’ and ‘include’ in order to widen participation in what already exists or is it to welcome and encourage resistance as a starting point for re-framing and re-defining curricula? Here students offer some important insights in to how teachers interested in the latter might begin to play the “contradictions, cleavages and dilemmas which inhere in the principles of classification...to produce different modalities of the elaborated code” (Bernstein, 2002:15) that are in Freire’s (1987) terms liberating rather than domesticating, where liberation is always already in process and where domestication might be taken to mean less than equal.

Students’ readings

Student voices

Newspaper

reading was the most popular type of reading done by college students, do you agree with this?

Yes

No

I read the Sun, not because of page 3 (laughter) it's got some like, front page, it's like for our age, without going in to too much detail, it's quite brief.

Yeah, simple normal, like you get the Times and they like take it much further on lots of pages, you get more

The Sun is much better

Do you read

Newspaper reading

Most students agreed, in line with the survey findings, that newspapers were a popular reading choice although typically they didn’t make particularly pro-active choices about the newspaper title they read, “whenever you’re on the bus there’s a newspaper there to read and every morning I read the Daily Star before I go out”. Rather they reported a ‘convenience’ approach, tending to read what was readily available. They saw newspaper reading as fulfilling a variety of purposes: information and opinion about the world around them, “I look at what’s going on around the country”: to follow interests, particularly sport and more specifically football and for entertainment:

A: the Sun’s funny

B: ...it’s full of gossip’

AK: you know it’s not true?

A: Yeah it’s more fun to read

B: Because it’s more outrageous and you’re wondering whether it’s true or not (group 4)

This latter function of newspaper reading was notably marked among the female students who found the

*together? Do you
buy your own
copy?*

We buy our own
copy, or share it
don't matter

Do you read in
College

Sometimes, I
usually read the
Metro on the way
to college

No I don't read
one I don't get
round to it.

Do you have

particular bits of

the newspaper

you like apart

from the problem

pages? Do you

read the sport

The sport, yeah
everybody likes
sport

Where do you
start the paper?
Page 3, then the
back

Yes I do,
I read the Metro,
because it's local.

That's the paper
that I read as
well, because it's
there isn't it? It's
convenient.

*It's on the bus
when you get on?*

It's free (all
three together)

Laughter

I've got one on me

*What bits do you
read?*

The first page,

horoscopes in particular an interesting focus for individual reflection or collective entertainment and or discussion about a variety of issues in their lives.

Only two of the students interviewed, both male, reported reading a broadsheet, one of these was an Asian newspaper and the other the Guardian and a single discourse about broadsheets and their readership permeated all the discussions perhaps causing the student who read the Guardian to add a qualifying codicil to his explanation of why he read a broadsheet: "Well I read the sport on the back of the Guardian, 'cos my dad gets the Guardian but it's only because there ain't any other paper to read".

Superficially size and physical unmanageability were seen to be obstacles to broadsheet reading:

Like the Guardian that's a big paper that is, you can't sit on a train with a like a big paper what if a girl just like walked past and you just wanna see her? You've got the Sun that's all right. (group 1)

I think it's because they look too formal, because they're really big and everyone expects there just to be facts and figures in them. (group 4)

However both these responses hint at the more complex issues around the identities students perceive that the elaborated code of the broadsheets make available for readers.

When asked who would read a broadsheet typical responses were:

They're aimed at people company people who are rich

star signs, any interesting stories
I just read all the different articles, when I'm bored I just get a newspaper my dad'll buy one and I just read it all I read the sports section

I just pick it up and look through it until something catches my eye and I wanna read about it

What kind of things catch your eye?

What's going on in the world.

What's big as well
Yeah (all)

Which do you read?

Sun

Any free

papers?the

metro?

F: Yeah, whatever if there's a newspaper I just catch it
Does anyone buy one?

No, not unless I need to know something
Not routinely but if you had to find something out you might?

Yeah (all)

What do you

and that (group1)

Who're brainy (group 1)

Old people, businessmen (group 4)

More like for rich people (group 6)

Business people, old people, snobs (group 1)

What is interesting is that although students were put off by the perception that broadsheets are "more complicated to read" (group 2) more often than not it is *not* a perception of the technical reading demands broadsheets might make of them that turns them off but a failure to recognise or find spaces for their own sense of themselves within the identities on offer. Those who do read broadsheets are clearly established as the 'other' more 'sophisticated' to the students' own senses of their 'regular' selves:

And the language which doesn't really communicate with us (group 5)

...they're so sophisticated the broadsheets (group 5)

The tabloids are just for regular people just to read because it's just straight in front of them (group 6)

Because they [business people/old people] probably thing that tabloids exaggerate everything and they think that Broadsheets could be like the proper story (group 4)

At times here the distinction between a perception of technical difficulty and identity is fused connecting the ability to 'decode' efficiently and effectively, 'competence', directly to particular social identities. Importantly these 'competent' social identities are remote from the 'regular'ness that the students claim for themselves. It is on these grounds and in these terms that broadsheets seem to be rejected as

read?

Sport, what's going on around the world

F: I go to the stars, and then I look at what's going on around the country, like wars and that
And do you all read the sport

first?

Yeah I do, what about you?

Nah I read anything

Group 4

most pop newspapers - do you agree?

Yeah and magazines

Which news do you read?

The Sun

Yeah, the sun

Yeah

How do you read is there a section you go to first?

No but I always read the problem pages and the TV guide

I just look at the front page and if there's any title that catches my eye I just look and read that article

So do you look for celebrities?

Yeah

No

She does

Do you read the

'irrelevant'. Furthermore notions of 'being a reader' are also bound up with the identity of the broadsheet consumer:

If there's a really long article and you haven't got time and you're not a reader you just...*[tapers out]*
(group 7)

Being a 'reader' is thus dovetailed in with the collective notion of the broadsheet reader identity, which by default situates this student at least as 'not' a reader.

The notional non-'reader', where the negative is meant to express motivation and agency rather than ability or capacity to read in the technical sense, is more attracted to particular ways of reading which stand in contrast to the preferences of their 'reader' counterparts:

The tabloids just give you what's going on, what you need to know, condensed so you don't have to think about it you're just told and it gives you an opinion, whereas the broadsheets tell you what's happened so you can make your own opinion (group 2)

There is a perhaps a perception about the broadsheet reader's confidence with meaning-making and taking that contrasts with the implied lack of confidence of the 'regular' or non-'reader' as this exchange with a female student in group 5 might suggest:

AK: You say that they [tabloids] might exaggerate but it doesn't stop you reading them?

No

AK: Are you, do you think you are influenced by the exaggeration? Can you see through that?

Not really I tend to believe what I read in there because you think it's right but then some of the things that come out you think well that can't be right

sports pages?

I do yeah

For DB or just in general?

For both really

So why most are they most popular?

Because your parents get them so you don't have to go and buy them

They're just there?

Yeah

Do you read free newspapers?

Sometimes I do on the bus sometimes but I don't read the chronicle or stuff that comes through the door
So free papers that come thru door you wouldn't read?

No

But you read on the bus like the metro?

The metro's got more interesting things than in like the local newspapers because in the local newspapers it's just like boring stuff really

So what's different what kind of stuff?

About things that happen like everywhere, but the local

AK: is that confusing?

Well yes it is really because you read stuff in the newspaper that says one thing and then you watch the news and it says something else.

Other students voiced a rejection of the content as they perceived it rather than the 'values' of broadsheets, here is a male student in group 6:

I'm just not into politics at all I just think it's pointless and some of these people just don't know what they're doing.

The 'othering' that these students engaged in throughout their discussions about newspapers might suggest something about the ways in which the elaborated code might work to construct barriers to participation that are much less about individual deficit than they are about social identities. Indeed 'barrier' may not be the right metaphor at all, rather an image of transaction may be called for to enable the visualisation of (socially) contingent selection or de-selection of the kinds of identities permitted and valorised through the elaborated code. That this might be a necessary way of re-thinking educational participation in a Black Country context is perhaps further supported by evidence published in the 2004 Black Country Learning Digest (2004). Under the heading 'barriers and attitudes to learning' it is reported that:

13% of people surveyed in the Black Country in 2002 felt that they wanted to engage in learning but were unable to do so...

However when further questioned about what prevents participation:

the main single response is that nothing prevents them from undertaking learning (55%). Of reasons given, most of these related to motivational reasons" (ibid:

newspaper its
just got like stuff
that's going on
round here, and
that's pretty
much nothing
Group 5
*What kind of
newspapers do
you read?*

Metro
Express and Star
News of the
world
The Sun
The Sunday
Mirror
*What do you
enjoy reading the
most?*

The Metro
The Sun
Yeah the Sun's
funny
It's full of gossip
You know it's not
true
*You know it's not
true?*

Yeah it's more
fun to read
Because it's more
outrageous and
you wondering if
it's true or not
Certain sections?
I read the, is it
Ralph's page
where all the pop
stars are, that
part
*Like a celebrity
bit?*

Yeah

36).

This suggests that respondents may well simply not feel attracted to the 'educational offer'.

Reading for pleasure

Many of the themes emerging in the discussions about newspaper reading were continued into a consideration of reading for pleasure. What was especially interesting about the reading for pleasure discussions was the direction of the topic flow in many of the discussions, whereby reading for pleasure was quickly, although implicitly, associated with 'book reading', this automatic, easy connecting of the two resonates with Passmore's understandings of 'reading' as 'reader of fiction', this term is paralleled by the heavily fiction-orientated content of English curricula.

The majority of students didn't feel that they spent much time reading for pleasure, some expressed this with confidence:

If I have some spare time I'd probably just have a cigarette (group 3)

Sometimes when there's nothing else to do (group 4)

Whilst the majority preferred to use 'availability of time' to think through how they used their leisure time which meant they talked about reading as one of a series of activities which competed for their time and attention, this strategy enabled them to defer a direct rejection of reading for pleasure:

AK: Why do some people never read for pleasure?

Time too busy with work (group 2)

Do you read the news?

Yeah I just go through it

Do you read from the back

M: I read the sport first and I don't read anything else, not much else really
Do you read in order? Or do you flick around?

With the Express and Star I always read like the headline first and then if its something good it usually continues on another page and then I read it but if it's like rubbish I just forget it and go to sport
So you read sport too?

yeah

What about the

Metro - what's

interesting

there?

The headlines are always catchy, I do actually read the headlines I flick through it and then I look at the star signs, I always read the star signs

The metro always got like what's going on in Birmingham at

Time or families or something (group 2)

AK: Do you read for pleasure?

I can't keep it up for long...I don't know it's just one of those things that don't seem necessary and it just gets in the way sort of thing (group 4)

Yeah I do when I have time, but sometimes I don't have time and like I'll start a book and whether I think it's good or not doesn't matter cos sometimes I just don't have time to carry it on and by the time I pick it up again I've forgot. (group 5)

This is interesting as it perhaps shows the students' reluctance to contradict what they *recognise* to be the identities and behaviours offered by the dominant discourse about reading as 'enrichment' although they appear to not to *realise* these and possible readings of this 'situating' will be discussed below.

Some students explicitly articulated their recognition of book reading behaviour/s and rejected the activity on precisely the terms they had identified. Here some male students in group 3 are talking about their preference for computer games over reading books and newspapers:

Sanjeev: It [a game] can challenge you, yeah, it's not boring, sometimes you get bored of newspaper reading and reading like, and computer games you've got like more games to do they don't get boring

William: You've got control over it, whereas the book it just takes you in a straight line from start to finish, whereas a game you can take it your own way.

Sanjeev: You can choose your own path in a game.

These students perceived the restrictions and limitations they associated with reading books were unlike the agency

the weekend
 And it's got weird
 stories as well
 'aint it
 Kind of like, really
 unusual stories
 from other parts
 of the world, like
 you know those
 little weird things
 Oh yeah
*What bizarre
 kind of stories?*

Well they just do
 like news from
 around the world
 but they usually
 am bizarre
 (laugh)
 Group 6
 A. Yeah I'd say
 so, whenever
 you're on the bus
 there's the
 newspaper there
 to read and every
 morning I read
 the Daily Star
 before I go out
*Do you get papers
 delivered?*

A. My parents
 buy it every
 morning
 What do you
 read?

B. The morning
 Sun that my dad
 brings back from
 work and the
 Daily Star
Whole thing?
 AI just kind of
 flick through
 until I find a
 story that
 interests me
 instead of all this
 political crap that

and freedom they enjoyed in gaming. As a reader of books they felt 'subject to' particular ways of being, as players of games they felt powerful and creative. These students seem ready to articulate something of what Gauntlett describes as late modernity "that all knowledge is provisional, and may be proved wrong in the future" (Gauntlett, 2002: 98) and seem ready, if not keen to "accept risks, and choose possible future actions by anticipating outcomes" (ibid). This notion of 'risk' and 'play' is crucial argues Gee (2003) to both active and critical learning. Gee contends that gaming offers the conditions for learning that is both active and critical. Gee identifies three key things that are "at stake" when we learn a new semiotic domain in a new way:

1. We learn to experience (see, feel and operate on) the world in new ways.
2. Since domains are usually shared by groups of people who carry them on as distinctive social practices, we gain the potential to join this group, to become affiliated with such kinds of people (even though we may never see all of them, or any of them face to face).
3. We gain resources that prepare us for future learning and problem solving in the domain and, perhaps, more important, in related domains.
 (Gee, 2003: 23)

However active learning does not necessarily manifest **critical** learning, for critical learning to occur Gee proposes that an additional feature is needed:

For learning to be critical as well as active, one additional feature is needed. The learner needs to learn not only how to understand and produce meanings in a particular semiotic domain, but, in addition, how to think about the domain at a "meta" level as a complex system of interrelated parts. The learner also needs to learn how to innovate in the domain – how to produce meanings that, while

comes up (both laugh)
So what kind of story would interest you?
 A. Erm sometimes I go for stories like kind of murder stories or whatever or sometimes I just go straight to the comics page
 B. Comics page gotta be
 Do you read the sports?
 A No
 B Yeah, football always gotta read the sports page first
The politics - tell me about that?
 A it just doesn't interest me and every now and again one slight story come up like this Cherie Blair thing you'll like hear it very day for like two weeks and like in papers like in the [unclear] it like covers 9 pages of it which is a waste of the paper virtually
 Why are those sorts of stories not imp for you?
 A I'm just not into politics at all I just think it's pointless and some of these people just don't know what they're

recognizable, are seen as somehow novel or unpredictable. (Gee, 2003:23)

The conditions of criticality Gee further argues are made possible through gaming as the player is 'licensed' within the domain, or social practice of gaming to take up a position as 'expert' and play at the margins of what is already possible or knowable to produce new meanings. The meaning of the game as 'text' becomes shape-able as well as knowable and the reader is re-situated 'reader' to learn:

...how to think about semiotic domains as design spaces that engage and manipulate people in certain ways and, in turn, help create certain relationships in society among people and groups of people, some of which have important implications for social justice. (Gee, 2003: 46)

Gee's ideas offer possibilities for readers that resonate with Peim's contention of the ways that post-structuralism re-situates the traditional reader:

texts don't stand on their own as bearers of their own self-defining meanings. Any text is always read from a particular point of view, by a subject (or subjects) positioned at a particular point...the 'true' text – is never more than an abstraction, an idea distinct from particularly positioned readings of aspects of the textual object.' (Peim: 1993:73).

And the post-structuralist reader encounters a world within which they are licensed to "accept that all knowledge is provisional, and may be proved wrong in the future... accept risks, and choose possible future actions by anticipating outcomes" (Gauntlett, 2002: 98).

However these are not the terms, as has been shown

doing
 B I don't follow
 politics that much
 it's too
 complicated
 Group 7

*newspapers were
 reported as the
 most popular type
 of reading in the
 survey - do you
 agree?*

Yeah

No

*What kind do you
 read?*

Metro (all)

And one's you
 find at home,
 with interesting
 articles or
 separate booklets

*Which bits do you
 read?*

Front page

Stars

*Sport? What
 makes you read
 this or not?*

Depends on your
 team like say your
 football team is
 on the back

*Do you buy
 newspaper?*

No

So buy free and
 those at home

*Why don't you
 read them?*

Not very often, if
 it's in the house

***Question 2 Why
 are locals more
 popular than
 tabloids?***

Group 1

Big ones are a lot
 more to read,
 there's too much

above, under which literacy curricula tend to make sense of reading for its participants. Thus the curriculum as is cannot imagine the conditions within which it is possible to recognise the kinds of reading behaviours, attitudes and identities expressed here as examples of 'good' or 'desirable' practice. Thus whilst the curriculum may be understood as promoting active (in Gee's definition) learning, it falls short of **critical** learning.

When set alongside the findings of the reading habits survey the excluding tendency of current curricula raises important questions of social justice. If it is possible that students who enjoy playing computer games or reading in perhaps non-linear ways on the internet may find the kinds of structuralist approaches to reading that dominate the curriculum (see above) both unappealing, undesirable and de-motivating and if it is further possible, as the reading habits survey suggests, that these groups of students are more likely to be male, from home environments where English is not the home or only home language, and attaining lower levels of accreditation in literacy then what can be said of the literacy curriculum? Is it reasonable to argue that the curriculum offer is either inclusive or ensuring equality of opportunity for these students? Furthermore how is the curriculum 'teaching' these groups of students to make sense of their subject identities in relation to the validated or legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991) forms of literacy?

Notions of male and female readers

The discourses that emerged about gender and reading understood male and female readers as antithetically distinct and distant from one another.

for one section
Like the Guardian
that's a big paper
that is, you can't
sit on the train
with like a big
paper what if a
girl just like
walked past you
and you just
wanna see her?
You've got the
Sun that's alright.
*So what kind of
people do read
the broadsheets
then?*

Business people,
old people, snobs
*What do you
mean by snob?*

They're usually
aimed at company
people who are
rich and all that.
Who're brainy
People who read
more
*Do you read the
news?*

Sometimes the
news keep up with
what's going on in
the world
*Do you watch the
news?*

Yeah
Group 2
They're more
complicated to
read.
yeah
The tabloids just
give you what's
going on, what you

The male reader read magazines about sport, particularly wrestling and football, cars and computer games and was typically perceived to start a newspaper from the back working pages and worked forwards. Men were thought to generally read less than women and in particular to be less interested in book reading:

I don't think they [men] read much I know my brothers wouldn't think about picking up a book and reading it there'd just pick up a magazine or a newspaper they wouldn't get a book and think aahhh this looks interesting (group 1 female)

You wouldn't see a man go into like Waterstones and say 'can I have a Shakespeare book' (group 2 female)

I don't know any of my friend that read really not many at all, I read cos I do English (group 4 male)

When male students did read books it was thought that they would prefer certain genres:

It's just kind of taste, blokes like to read big macho books so they can put themselves in the shoes of the hero and the girls just like to read the romantic novels so they can put themselves in the shoes of the girl who's getting some (group 6 male)

This resonates with the earlier comments from the male readers who talked about enjoying activities which put them in an active role and again whilst here 'macho' is seen as the reason for choosing to read a particular genre of book it is seen more generally, as in the following exchange, as also being a reason why male students might do less reading:

I think because it's not their kind of thing, they're more into macho things and books aren't mach are they

need to know,
condescends, so
you don't have to
think about it
you're just told
and it gives you
an opinion,
whereas the
broadsheets tell
you what's
happened so you
can make your
own opinion.
*What's less
attractive?*
You have to think
for yourself, you
have to go 'hmm
what do I think
of this?'
*What about local
newspapers?*
Both cos you
wanna know
what's going on in
your own area but
also worldwide as
well you want to
know what's going
on in other parts
of the world
News on TV?
Yes I have to
because it's on
constantly on the
moment cos my
Dad's a fireman
Group 3
No not really, I
sometimes read a
broadsheet
Which one?

An Asian one
F: Whatever
looks interesting
Anything
Group 4
I think it's
because they look

No, they're not

They're just about women and stuff like that and I don't
know...*trails off*

AK: what are books if they're not macho? How would
you describe them?

Intellectual (they all laugh)

(group 2, all female group)

Here the male identity is seen as unlikely to be associated
with reading as an intellectual activity and there was some
feeling that they were more likely to read for a specific
purpose choosing not to select books "unless they need the
book for like work or they're doing a topic or something like
that" (group 2 female) rather than as an abstract pursuit.

Generally the male students who participated in the
discussions appeared, at least in this 'public' setting,
comfortable and familiar with this discourse in the sense
that they chose not to speak against or oppose it. The
female participants on the other hand seemed to sit more
uncomfortably with the discourses about female readers
that emerged and rarely recognised their own senses of
themselves within them:

Females are more likely to go for love stories whereas
boys are meant to go for violence (group 2, female)

You just see girls reading the stars and stuff (group 3
male)

Girls are probably, I don't know the word for it, stupid
I'd call it you like interested in their love life more than
lads would be (group 3 male)

I think females they all read romance books you can
picture it can't you and that chaps are reading like
what's that book football factory and stuff like that
(group 4, female)

too formal,
because they're
really big and
everyone expects
there to just be
facts and figures
in them
Have you ever
read them?
No, I don't read
broadsheets
Who would read a
broadsheet?
Old people,
businessmen
Why business?
Because they
probably think
that tabloids are
[unclear]
*Why might they
think that?*
Because they
probably think
that tabloids
exaggerate
everything and
they think that
BSs could be like
the proper story
Do you agree?
Yeah
*You say that they
might exaggerate
but it doesn't
stop you reading
them?*
No
*Are you, do you
think you are
influenced by the
exaggeration?*
*Can you see
through that?*
Not really I tend
to believe what I
read in there
because you think
it's right but then
some of the

Normally when you have the female students they've
always got some kind of love novel tucked away
somewhere (group 6, male)

Unlike with the male readers the question of whether or not
female students would choose to read was absent and
reading seemed to be accepted and acceptable as a
legitimate 'female pursuit'. The focus of the female reader
was comprehensively agreed to be 'love and romance'
however, interestingly when asked if this perception
concurred with their own reading preferences none of the
female participants felt it represented their own reading
choices:

I like reading books with drugs in and violence
because it's like it's more associated with reality
whereas all this romance and lovey dovey stuff isn't
(group 4, female)

I don't know anyone of our age who reads it, but I
know my Nan does and you know like Catherine
Cookson and stuff like that...our interests are different,
we're not interested in romance and stuff like that it's
like an older generation (group 4 female)

Female students seemed much more comfortable than
male students with the articulation of non-conformity with
and to a stereotype.

Reading magazines

The discussants agreed with the survey findings that
magazines represented a significant aspect of their reading
preferences and activity. As with newspapers the students
attributed a range of functions for their magazine reading,
entertainment; to pursue hobbies and interests; to find out
about favourite celebrities and to become more informed

things that come
out you think well
that can't be
right

*Is that
confusing?*

Well yes it is
really because
you read stuff in
the newspaper
that says one
thing and then
you watch the
news and it says
something else

Group 6

There's less to
read

Because they're
so sophisticated
the broadsheets
Yeah they're
boring, like the
language and
everything
You get bored
after reading a
sentence

It's like you'll like
read the headline
on like a
broadsheet and
you'll be like 'oh
yeah that's
alright' and then
you'll actually
start reading the
article and it just
like bores you
after a while

It just goes on
forever

Yeah it's just too
big as well

And the language
which doesn't
really like
communicate with
us

about what they perceived to be important and relevant
contemporary issues:

[I buy them because of the] stories they've got in them,
because I read OK and Empire you know the film
magazine and if it's got a film that I want to read about
then I buy it or if it's got a celebrity that I'm interested
in then I'll buy it. (group1)

Yeah the funny things, like the confessions and stuff, I
love those back page[s], I always go straight to the
back pages. (group 1)

[do you read magazines?] Occasionally, not on a
regular basis, not like every single week just
occasionally I read musical ones to do with different
bands I like and that ... (group 3)

[about More magazine] I thought it was just a celebrity
magazine but it's not they do some really good
articles, really good issues, they've done stuff on like
robbers and what you can do [to protect yourself] and
all kinds of things, drugs, anorexia they've done all
kinds of good different subjects and they're not afraid
to say what they think which is good (group 2)

Magazines were often the focus of 'quiet time':

I've never really discussed it with my friends we don't
talk about magazines (group 2)

If I've left a magazine lying around and my friend
comes round I'll pick it up and we'll have a laugh at
something or whatever but ordinarily I think you buy a
magazine and it's time for yourself to sit down and
read and just have some peace and quiet (group 2)

But single copies of magazines seemed to 'flow' freely
between readers separated by experience, gender and
generation:

Well, I don't buy them very often but when my sister
comes home [from University] I go up to my sister's
she shares, she's living with 3 other girls and like they
have which magazine they buy each week and then in

Who would read them?

Business men
old people
my dad
people not like you?
Yeah
Well I read the sport on the back of the *Guardian*, cos my dad gets the *Guardian* but it's only because there ain't any other paper to read
So you don't go into the rest
Yeah just the sport usually
Do you buy your own papers?

Sometimes but we always have the *express* and *star* at home
Where read?

Metro on the bus
At home
After college
Group 6
A It's probably because the tabloids are just for regular people just to read because it's just straight in front of them
B a Lot easier language
A straight language, whereas if you read a broadsheet apart from the fact

the flat there'll be five different ones in so I can like [choose] anything (group 5)

I read *FHM* because my brother buys it and I just like reading it (group 2, female)

I read *Woman's Own* when I'm really bored in the bath, it's my Mum's and I've read *Elle* which is my sister's (group 4)

If I leave magazines around the house then my brother's will read them and then they'll say they didn't as they don't want to be seen reading a women's magazine (group 2)

A: I read *FHM*, sometimes *Loaded*, Just them two, and sometimes when I go down my cousins cos they're all girls sometimes *Sugar*.

All: Laugh

AK: *So you pick it up if it's around? Why?*

A: It's got interesting things, sometimes it does have some interesting gossip, which I would like to know about (group 1, male)

Female students as readers of magazines

The typical female reader's relationship with magazine content was confident and assertive. They welcomed the fact that magazines were "not afraid to say what they think" (group 2, female) about important issues and felt magazines offered them useful information and opinions "they're always on about your body and how you shouldn't be ashamed [of it]" (group 4, female). However they also felt comfortable with and justified in rejecting the ideas and images on offer:

sometimes they have babyish stuff in don't they...they have some really naff clothes in there and they say it's fashionable and you just don't believe it" (group 4, female)

that it's too big it just has lots of technical stuff in it and more like for the rich people

Why do you feel they're more for rich people?

B: It's so much easier to read a tabloid

A and the broadsheets go for more different kind of language and they also have lots of the stock exchange in there
Do you read Local papers?

A: occasionally I read the evening mail

Do you prefer national to local?

A: I prefer national, there's just more stories sometimes when you read a local paper there's just nothing interesting

B: I don't read them

Do you read the free papers like the Metro?

A: Oh yeah, that's the bus paper it's on the way

B: yeah

Cos it's there?

B: you've always got to read the star signs (laughs)

Do you read

feeling that they were not especially influenced by what they read in magazines. They did however express concerns about younger readers, the participants in group 2 couldn't remember any specific ways in which things they'd read in magazines impacted on their lives but they did articulate concerns about the impact of magazine reading on younger readers:

A: I think people with low self-esteem are where they read something about anorexia and think 'oooh I might get some attention from that' or smoking or drinking I get some attention I'll try that and they'll read other people's experience and they'll think well they got attention maybe I can

B: I think maybe younger kids as well, say a young girl if she reads say Sugar or Bliss or something and all the make-up and the clothes and fashion and they'd probably take that away and think 'oh I want that new top' or that coat or something

C: And when they're like 13 and there's like all these Sugars and stuff and they've got like oh love you need to find a boyfriend and look at all these pictures and stuff and I think it's really bad because they don't need to and the magazines sometimes portray that they have to be popular and to be..

AK: But you wouldn't say that was a problem for your peer group?

All: No

B: I think it's just like a younger age group

A: Because they're more gullible aren't they, they believe what they read.

This notion that other social groups are more vulnerable to persuasion and damage than your own could be seen as a parallel to the teachers cited above and Passmore's concerns and anxieties about students as readers.

them?

B: don't believe in it but really just read it for the hell of it

Do you believe what you read in the newspapers?

A: not all of the time some of the stories are a bit over the top like one time I read a story about a dude who was split in half by an elevator and was still alive that was definitely over the top

What makes you decide if you believe it or not?

A: well I guess it's more like when you have eye witnesses and everything and professional reports instead of just this one story in the paper that you don't hear of anywhere else

Group 7

Depends on the headline I'd say, depends on the headline if I think it looks really good I'll just carry on reading anyway if it's not I'll just leave it alone

Why do you prefer tabloids?

Patience, if there's a really

At other time articles were used as reference points for 'negative identification' (Gauntlett, 2002: 199):

A...the life stories make you feel better about yourself

B: Like 'I was pregnant at 12 and survived' thank god that's not me (group 4, 2 female's)

This pattern of consuming magazines would seem to concur with the 'pick and mix' female reader Gauntlett (2002) identifies:

They enjoy the magazines, and may at times learn bits and pieces – ideas how to look or behave, as well as straightforward information about health, popular culture or social issues. At the same time, these readers would not often argue that the magazines are perfect or ideal...the magazines are not taken literally although they may suggest some good ideas' (Gauntlett 2002:196).

Like Gauntlett's readers the female participants in this study did not seem to read magazines as 'blue prints' for authoring identity rather magazines seemed to offer possibilities for 'being' that 'might' be engaged with dialogically. This would seem to diffuse the kinds of concerns about young women's magazines that are expressed by writers like McRobbie (1991) who are concerned by the impact of the, in feminist terms, negative imagery and identities offered. Rather, in contrast with the grammar of curriculum relations discussed above where the classificatory modal form, 'must' and 'should', are highly directive the grammar of magazine reading shifts the modals of sense making to a gentler 'might' or 'could'. Magazines seem to offer a mode of sense making within which relations between objects is less interfered with. This opens up the possibility of more liberated, promiscuous even, understandings of reading that are not conceivable

long article and
you really haven't
got time and
you're not a
reader you just
*What do you
mean by 'not a
reader'?*

Like my sister
she doesn't really
like to read
things so she just
like looks at little
things like the
headlines and
little articles she
doesn't...

*What do you
read for
pleasure?*

within the prescriptive modalities of the curriculum: there is no 'A grade' reader or reading against which any reader or reading 'must' or 'should' be measured. Rather female readers are invited to "play with different types of imagery" (Gauntlett, 2002:206).

Here then is a potentially more radical reading experience where 'readers', 'texts' and 'readings' are weakly framed and classified, opening up the kinds of possibilities for a "new social basis for consensus of interest and opposition" that Bernstein speaks of (2000:11) within which identity/ies are always already "exposed as artifice and performance" (Gauntlett, 2002:206).

This resonates with Foucault's contemplation of the potentiality of magazines to facilitate the authoring of 'alternative' culture/s, speaking of homosexual identity/culture he wonders whether:

something well considered and voluntary like a magazine ought to make possible a homosexual culture, that is to say, the instruments for polymorphic, varied, and individually moderated relationships (Foucault, 2000:139).

Here Foucault re-thinks the cultural meanings of the magazine, magazines are interesting for him not on account of their symbolic value but in their capacity to perform and replay responses to the question "what can be played?" (2000:140). In these terms the magazine reading of the participants discussed above might be recast from 'passive', 'consumerist' and valueless, as understood by the teacher's talking above (page number) to something commensurate, or at least sympathetic to, Butler's (1990) understanding of 'gender trouble'. In her reclaiming account of the tradition of

I read magazines
 WM: I read
 novels, dark
 [unclear] series,
 Lord of the Rings.
 So fantasy fiction
 WM: Not fiction,
 just fantasy,
 can't stand
 fiction book.
*What's a fiction
 book?*

Sci-fi
*Why do you think
 some people
 report that they
 never read for
 pleasure?*

WM: They don't
 have the time
 They're always
 stuck on their
 play stations,
 game console
*Do you spend
 more time on
 reading/comp
 games?*

Probably games
 innit
 All: Games
Why?

WM: They don't
 read books
 It's challenging
 Wm: I can get
 through a book in
 two days
*What is appealing
 about games?*

It's challenging
 It can challenge
 you, yeah, it's not

the women's magazine Beetham argues, unlike for example McRobbie (1991), that the magazine genre has always offered possibilities for imagining new desires:

...If the reader accepts the position of 'woman' offered by the magazine, she takes on both the role and character which defines it as womanly...I want to resist this way of describing how the periodical works, not least because as a genre it has another equally important characteristic which militates against this argument...the more successful periodical forms like the magazine and newspaper are the least homogenous. The periodical is generically as well physically more liable to disintegrate than the book. Its typical contents – narratives, poems, pictures, competitions, jokes – are forms which have a more substantial cultural presence outside the periodical. All this suggests a more fractured rather than a rigidly coherent form. (Beetham, 1996: 12)

Beetham goes on to argue that these characteristics serve to ensure that the "interpellation of the reader into the role that the magazine defines" is always already "fractured by the way the form works to empower the reader" (Beetham, 1996: 13). In Bernstein's (2002) terms both framing and classification, power and control are weak enabling an elaborated code within which discourse, identities and voices are less specialised and the selection of communication (sequencing, pacing, criteria etc) is more negotiable. For Beetham these features of the magazine genre define it as a 'feminine' opposite and Beetham claims Kristeva's (1979) notion of 'women's time' for the magazine, to the more tightly classified and framed novel. The magazine, Beetham argues, enables and encourages the possibility of the 'resisting reader' (Fetterley, 1978 in Beetham 1996).

boring, sometimes
you get bored of
newspaper
reading and
reading like and
computer games
you've got like
more games to
do, they don't get
boring

Wm: You've got
control over it;
whereas the book
it just takes you
in a straight line
from start to
finish, whereas a
game you can take
it your own way.
*So there's lots of
directions, it isn't
linear?*

You can choose
your own path in a
game.

Group 2
Time too busy
with work
Time or families
or something
Or they just can't
read (laugh)
Or they'd rather
watch a film or
the TV
programme
rather than sit
down and read
the book

Why?
Probably more
entertaining as
well watching
someone on the
TV
or the cinema
screen than

Male students as readers of magazines

Whereas for female readers magazines seemed to offer focal points for reflexive negotiation of identity/ies male readers' interactions with magazine reading seemed to resonate more comfortably with the modalities of institutional practices. For male readers magazines reading represented knowledge acquisition about hobbies and interests that seemed to parallel the reading practices those of the institution more closely. Here two Asian male students who have been discussing reading car magazines explain their interest in cars:

AK: Why do you like cars?

A. Well mostly because of the speed, the adrenaline

B. Or the high volume music, cos you've got a bass box in there and your CDs in there

A. It's your own, it's your own little personal room

B. Yeah

A. Like although you do have privacy in your bedroom, your parents and that do occasionally come in and knock or whatever, but the car you got the keys to it so no one can go in there except for you.

AK: So it's your space

A. Yeah

AK: Does it matter what kind of car you've got?

(Laughter)

B. Yeah, it does matter yeah

A. If you've just got a banger, just forget it

AK: What kind of car's a banger?

A. Something old, something like the old Nissan Micra

AK: And what's a good car to have?

A: You could have a car like a Corsa and you can kit that up and make it look really good and you won't even know it..

AK: So is that why people spend time improving their cars? Because it's their space?

B: Yeah

B: It's also attractive to women as well...I think

AK: Have they told you that?

A: Nah, they'll say if I ever see a man with a... indecipherable... [unattractive car] I wouldn't go out with him or get married to him blah blah and we like to be the centre of attention

B: You know women say...nice cars

actually reading a book because you have to get a visual guide, you have to get pictures in your head of what people look like whereas on the screen they're just there aren't they...you might not get into the first page of it but by watching the first scene you go 'oh that's interesting'
Mmm
Mmm

Group 3

F: I sometimes try to get into it, sometimes I try to get into a new hobby or something and when I get into it I enjoy it but depending on what it's about I can't keep it up for very long.
Why is that?

F: I don't know it's just one of those things that don't seem necessary and it just gets in the way sort of thing
Do you read for fun?

F: no we've got TVs for that

(2 x Asian male students, group 1)

These male readers saw their cars as spaces on which they could play out and publicly project their senses of 'self', a kind of 'Room of One's Own' (Woolf, 1929) that allows the fulfilment and facilitation of 'self' in a wider context of constraint. The magazines functioned, as for female readers, to offer prompts and possibilities for representing self through negotiation of symbolic codes. However the male readers were characteristically less critical and more acquiescent to the identities inscribed through the modalities of their 'hobby' magazines. Here 2 male students from group 6 talk about reading their favourite magazines, *Playstation* and *Improve your Course Fishing*:

AK: Do you read FHM or loaded or any of those?

No (both)

AK: Do you know people who do?

A: Well they must be popular among young men because they're bought, more pictures less writing.

AK: What kind of magazines most pop among your peer group?

A: with my friends it's Playstation magazines and just about video games and what's coming out

B: Share? Always buy?

A: buy them when they come out to see if you can find out about the latest releases and everything and er when it comes to reading I just flick to the game that I'm interested in and the review and everything

AK: They're quite costly aren't they?

A: yeah, five quid

AK: Can you talk to me about the content?

A: With Playstation magazine it's reviews, up coming releases, cheats and readers writing in

AK: And they cost

A: Mines about a fiver

B: four fifty for mine

AK: And what do you get back for that money?

A: well it gives you all the information but with mine it also gives you like a free CD which gives you like video reviews so you can watch what the games going to be like instead of just looking at a picture and

(laughs)
*Is that what
 you'd do instead
 of read?*

F: yeah
 For pleasure,
 sports and stuff
 like that
 otherwise just to
 know what's going
 on.

*Do you play
 computer games?*

Yeah

Yeah

*And if you had a
 bit of spare time
 would you be
 more likely to
 play a computer
 game than read?*

Yeah (all)

F: I don't play
 computer games,
 if I had some
 spare time I'd
 probably just play
 a cigarette or
 something

Group 4
 Sometimes when
 there's nothing
 else to do
*What kind of
 thing?*

I read harry
 potter once but
 don't let it get
 out (all laugh)

Don't worry

*Harry potter
 came out in the*

occasionally they give away a free movie

B: occasionally if you get a PC one you might get a few demos

AK: What are they?

A: demos are

B: an actual section of the game contained for you

A: like if a game's in production they'll let you play a part of it although it's not completely finished so you can give it a go to see if you like it saves your money on buying it

AK: Is that something that'll make you more likely to buy it?

B: if it's one you want to play

All the male readers talking above preferred 'hobby' or special interest magazines to the lifestyle titles like FHM or Loaded. These former magazine types might be understood in Bernstein's (2000) terms as being vertical knowledge discourses which are strongly classified and insulated and weakly framed, that is to say that the reader is invited to become 'expert' but the pace, level or degree to which expertise is acquired is unspecified. In classificatory terms this resonates with the traditional notions of pedagogic practice that Bernstein argues were a feature of the early part of twentieth century (2000:9). In this sense the male reader choices about magazine reading might be seen to resonate more closely with the more traditional institutional notions of knowledge acquisition that are characteristic of 'formal' schooling. By contrast the female did not articulate a 'need to know' aspect to their purpose for reading.

Reading preferences and perceptions of relevance

Throughout the discussions the students drew heavily on a discourse of 'relevance/irrelevance' when talking about why they enjoyed magazine reading:

*survey as the top
title, so it's not
just you!*

It's alright
[unclear]
*Do you read
books?*
Horror, just like
interesting
stories
Books of films?
I read the book
once I've seen
the film
I read the book
first because it
tells you about
the proper story
lines and
everything but
when you watch
the film you
notice what
they've changed
but if you watch
the film first
you're not really
gonna notice
*How do you feel
about that?*
On the film they
do miss out
several chapters
and that but the
only reason I
read the book is
because I've seen
the film

Group 5

I read before I
go to bed, novels
at the moment
it's a Catherine
Cookson book but
I do read for
pleasure
Same for

It's [a particular magazine] not so much aimed at us but our age group more than English is aimed at us English students, so it's something that we can relate to in our life, the clothes that they buy are from shops that we would go to and if we don't we think 'hey I should try that shop out' (group 5)

This distinction between relevant and irrelevant and the correlation of the latter categories with leisure reading and college reading was repeated throughout the interviews. In the following exchanges students make clear distinctions between self-elected activities, including reading activities, and the reading they are required to do in English:

[To the question has anything you've been required to read crossed over into pleasurable reading?] If it's anything involving Shakespeare then No (laughs). Not really not really poetry or anything else it's just something you read in the lesson and then you go out and do what you want. (group 6)

AK: Why are magazines so popular?

A: Because they're aimed at us. It's from where we are, halfway, we're either halfway or are coming into the adult world.

B: and it's aimed at us and our level

AK: How is it different to the stuff you do in college because presumably that's aimed at you too.

A: it's more informal, more to your level and you know like people have their own words for certain things whereas English is formal and accurate, it's real straight English

AK: So magazines reflect the language you tend to use outside college?

B: yeah, street talk
(group 1)

There seems to be a resonance here with perceptions of tabloid and broadsheets. Additionally in this second exchange some interesting ideas are raised about language in the curriculum. The understanding of language use expressed here alludes not only to the rules of 'appropriacy'

everybody?

Yeah I do when I have time, but sometimes I don't have time and like I'll start a book and whether I think it's good or not doesn't matter cos sometimes I just don't have time to carry it on and by the time I pick it up again I've forgot

What do you

spend your time

on?

Work

College work (all)

How many hours?

18

20 now it's coming up to Christmas, like they force you

They force you?

well yeah they put the pressure on you, cos like when I got the job in September they said you've got to be prepared to be flexible at Christmas mine's a flexi contract

What kinds of

things do you do?

Sainsbury's

Shop work

Waitressing

(Fairclough, 1992) within and across domains, but also to the model of language implicit to the English curriculum.

English in college is perceived to be 'formal', 'accurate' and 'straight', fixed and knowable (i.e. a set of rules which one learns to recognise and realise) whereas outside college language is more 'up for grabs' more reminiscent, perhaps, of Bakhtin's (1981) notion of centripetal/centrifugal. Here we see exposed the rupture between in-school and out-of-school literacy but at the same time a capitulation to the conditions that make disjuncture possible. The 'fact' of such acceptance demonstrates the success of the 'insulation' and 'framing' processes at play within the modalities of institutional practice.

The degree to which students seemed to concur with these divisions and classificatory principles seemed to vary according to the level of their positioning within the hierarchical discourse of 'subject English' (Peim, 1993), with those achieving higher levels of 'competence' or 'realisation' demonstrating a greater degree of acquiescence. Compare for example the ways in which students following GCSE, all of whom are experiencing this course as a re-sit, A/S students and A2 students relate teacher-led activities/reading to their own preferences. Here students are talking about the extent to which they feel their teachers influence their reading choices and how they feel about the books they're introduced to in college.

GCSE students felt the distinction between their own choices and those imposed by teachers most keenly:

I don't think I've ever been influenced by a teacher to read anything (group 1)

[does anything you read are required to read cross

Group 6

A: yeah it passes
the time
When?

A: when I wake up
in the morning

B: I'm exactly the
opposite last
thing at night
What do you
read?

A: horror novels

B: factual books

over into pleasurable reading?]. . . I think they're just trying to brain wash us with the poetry, trying to make us read more even though it's absolute rubbish (group 6)

These students were least likely to 'recognise' the 'value' of the texts and reading practices they encountered within the institutional context or that "the text is a 'position-taking' which takes part in and establishes symbolic exchange" (Colebrook, 1997:102). The GCSE students in group 6 were asked to consider why they thought they had to read Shakespeare and poetry:

Group 7

Yeah

Books

*Do you find
differences
between men and
women?*

Whatever suits
them

Yeah I think I
actually read that
men are more
likely to read
science fiction
and women are
more likely to
read stuff that
they can relate
to, for me I just
read everything
but things that
don't keep my
attention that's it

A: No idea

B: exam board (laughs)

A: I guess it's just kind of like reading all this stuff
it's just like trying to improve your reading skills

They were unable to offer a rationale for their reading curriculum beyond a notion of prescription and drew upon a discourse of skill to make sense of the practices they encountered. In Bernstein's (2000) terms this group of students were most likely to 'mis-recognise' the rules of symbolic value operating within the modality of practice and were therefore also least likely to go on and 'realise' the identities and practices required for legitimated measures of 'success' or 'achievement'. Although similar degrees of mis-recognition were noted among the A/S students they were more like to see the teacher as a 'guide' or 'role-model' for 'learning about' recognition. Here A/S students and A2 students discuss the influence teachers have on their leisure reading:

**Do you think
there are
differences
between male
and females as
readers?**

A/S students

Group 1

Yeah girls read
more like the
horoscopes and
stuff like that

Because teachers make you read a book and you say I wanna read this and they say no "no no this is much better". (group 4)

There more into
like girls...
Gossip
Gossip yeah.
Men like sport
and page 3 (laugh)
Why?

Just the way we
are, we're
probably more
hyperactive than
girls.
Don't take it the
wrong way

Group 2
Yes the boys tend
to go straight to
the back pages
and work their
way backwards
unless it's the
Sun where they
want to see the
page 3 but
normally they go
to the sport at
the back to see
who won the last
football match or
whatever

*So it's not just
things that you
might be reading
it's reading in a
different way?*

Yes

*What about the
things you might
select are they
different?*

Different things,
because if you go
to a shop and buy
magazines you
don't necessarily
buy the same
magazines
because women

[Do teachers influence your reading choices?] I
suppose they do but we don't realise they're doing it
(group 7)

A2 Students

I think teachers influence you, like if you're having a
conversation with a teacher about just generally
what to read because they're older and especially
like our English teachers they're familiar with a lot of
books and if you tell them what you want like or
what you're after they'll like suggest things to you
and like you're more willing to have a got because
it's something they've suggested (group 5)

Yeah I read Nights at the Circus and it was
recommended to me by [English teacher] and I
looked at it at first and I thought this isn't my cup of
tea and I read it and I kind of really got into it.
(group 5)

A: I think the newspaper started to do that [become
pleasurable reading] because last year we had to
do a lot of work on newspaper articles.

B: yeah the Tony Blair articles

C: So although I did read them before hand I was
looking for particular stuff I'd like whereas before I
probably wouldn't read stuff about politics but
because I did a piece on that topic I do now
because I'm more aware of it now. (group 2)

Although all groups of students saw the reading they did at
college as distinct and separate from their leisure reading,
as they moved up through the qualification hierarchy they
were much more likely to draw upon (and accept) a
discourse of 'enrichment' to explain and accommodate this
disparity. The A2 students, although no more convinced of
the relevance of their curriculum to the way they understood
their lives and desires, recognised the kinds of 'distinctions'
(Bourdieu, 2002) exercised by the internal influences on
framing, represented by the teachers talking above (Kendall
et al 2002, Avis et al, 2002) and the external influences on
framing, represented in the Times Educational Supplement

buy more teeny
girly magazines
whereas boys buy
more FHM
Football
And FHM and
stuff
And wrestling
Any thing else?
Books as well,
females more
inclined to go to
like love stories
whereas boys are
meant to go for
violence
And I don't think
they really read
much I know my
brothers wouldn't
think about
picking a book up
and reading it
there'd just pick
up a magazine or
a newspaper they
wouldn't get a
book and think
'aahh this looks
interesting'
*Why do you think
that is?*
I don't know
I think because
it's not their kind
of thing, they're
more into macho
things and books
aren't macho are
they?
No they're not
They're just
about women and
stuff like that
and I don't know
*What are books
if they're not
macho? How
would you
describe them?*

(Passmore, 2002). This enabled them to make the transition from recognition through to realisation:

[does anything you're introduced to in college cross over into leisure reading?] I think the newspaper started to do that because last year we had to do a lot of work on newspaper articles...so although I did read them beforehand I was looking for particular stuff I'd like whereas before I probably wouldn't read stuff about politics but because I did a piece on that topic I do now because I'm more aware of it now.
(group 2 female)

The teacher is seen as central to this process, here another A2 student in group 2 discusses her teacher's influence on her reading:

...we're doing these diaries and that and we can analyse them and look through them as well whereas if I, we were at home and my sister said look read this diary I don't think I would, even if she did ask me to.

Both these students expressed a degree of excitement and personal achievement in having managed to acquire and practice what was, for them, a 'new' or 'different' way of reading and thinking about texts and these newly acquired practices 'distinguished' them both from other students at 'lower' stages of reading development and from their 'former selves'

Understandings of 'well read'

Such hierarchical 'distinctions' are further illustrated by the differentiated discussions of the profile and desirability of the kinds of reading identities represented by their teachers. The students were asked to define what it meant to be 'well read', whether they knew anyone who was well read and whether they felt this to be an important or attractive thing

Intellectual
All laugh
Women, I don't
know, More
women I think do
read books
You wouldn't see a
man go into like
Waterstones and
say 'can I have
Shakespeares
book
Unless they need
the book for like
work or they're
doing it for a
topic or
something like
that
*So it might be
something that's
more useful
rather than of
interest?*
Yeah

Group 3
Different (all)
Cos you wouldn't
seem many girls
reading the
sports pages
F: No
You just see girls
reading the stars
and stuff
F: yeah
Girls and
horoscopes?
F: girls are
probably, I don't
know the word
for it, stupid I'd
call it you know
like interested in
their love life
more than lads
would be
Why do lads like

about a person.

All student groups shared a collective idea about what it meant to be 'well read', these three exchanges from groups 1, 2 and 3 typify the responses:

A: Someone who knows everything
B: Knows all the words and just reads it
C: to be good at English you need to I think, what my Dad always says is to be good at English you need to read books which help you on your words.
AK: What kind of texts would a good reader read?
Would they read differently to you?
A: Yeah, they would read everything
AK: Would they read tabloids or magazines?
B: No, I doubt it
A: I wouldn't say they'd read tabloids and that
C: Just like erm, my Dad's got the Readers Digest, it's got some big words and they just get stuck in your head, tabloids nah. Like the Sun I don't think that's very formal
AK: Would a good reader read the Sun?
B: Nah
A: I think some of them would you know, I'm not sure though, they might take some time out
AK: Would they read novels do you think?
Yeah
AK: How are novels and magazines different?
A: There's erm, a novel there's more background to it
AK: That sounds interesting
A: Usually when people write novels they, either they write about something which has happened to them before or actually it's usually always they write about themselves but they don't actually put their names in it they use someone else to represent their stories whereas magazines it's just more or less a quick summary of what's been happening or what is going to happen
(group 1)

A: It means well educated and to read, like, complicated texts
B: It means to me that they've got a wide range of knowledge and that they do read regularly
C: They read a lot
AK: What do you mean by complicated texts?

sport?

It's just like one
of the lad things
innit

Group 4

Yeah

I think females
they all read
romance books
you can picture it
can't you and the
chaps are reading
like what's that
book, like that
book football
factory and stuff
like that

*Do you read
romance?*

No (all emphatic)

I read horror
I like reading
books with drugs
in and violence
because it's like
it's more
associated with
reality whereas
all this romance
and loveydovey
stuff isn't

*Who are the
females who read
it?*

My mum does, she
reads like those
blossom blue
books or
whatever you call
them (they all
laugh)

*So is it an older
generation what
about people of
your age?*

I don't know
anyone of our age

A: Like that law thing we did on offences against the person or something and some of the stuff in there if you're not familiar with like law terms and that it may be a bit beyond you so people who can just pick something up and just read and like tabloids no not tabloids, broadsheets.

(group 2)

A: read clear

B: understand what they're reading and don't get stuck on words

(group 3)

The students articulated a discourse about the well-read person which conceived a high-consuming reader, who read widely and effortlessly. This reader was well educated reader and able to cross the textual boundaries of disciplinary domains easily. S/he made and appreciated distinctions between texts, preferring novels to magazines and broadsheets to tabloids, had a wide vocabulary and read fluently. The resonance with the 'grammar' and vocabulary of the 'effective reader' outlined in the various curricula documents is strong:

Candidates demonstrate a **comprehensive, detailed knowledge** and understanding of a **wider range** of literary **texts from past to the present**, and of the critical concepts associated with literary study. (WJEC, 2000: 24)

Texts from different cultures and traditions Pupils should be taught a) to understand the values and assumptions in the texts b) **the significance of the subject matter and the language** c) the distinctive qualities of literature from different traditions d) how familiar themes are explored in different cultural contexts e) to make connections and comparisons between texts from different cultures (KS4)

Adults should be taught to use **different reading strategies** to find and obtain information e.g. skimming, scanning, detailed reading (Basic Skills

who reads it, but
 I know my nan
 does and you
 know like
 Catherine
 Cookson and stuff
 like that
*Not your
 generation? Is
 there a
 difference
 between how your
 mums read and
 how you read?*
 Our interests are
 different, we're
 not interested in
 romance and
 stuff like that
 it's like an older
 generation
 I think it's
 because their
 lives are just
 ruined (they all
 laugh)
Male students?
 Football books
 and stuff like
 that, my step dad
 he like reads? and
 football violence
 and stuff like
 that and football
 hooligans and axe
 murderers which
 is pretty scary
*What about male
 students people
 of your age?*
 I don't know any
 chaps that really
 read
 No
 No

Group 5
 I'd say they did
 because I don't

Agency, 2001: 92)

Additionally being 'well read' was seen to be a state of 'knowing', with the reader becoming 'enriched' through an endeavour of constant consumption. Texts are understood to be universally accessible to the skilled reader, representing a set of universals that the 'well read' consumer might easily be able to 'decode' regardless of their positioning within and to specific knowledge or cultural or institutional domains. This notion of 'well read' draws heavily on both a discourse of 'reading as skill', and a discourse of 'reading as enrichment' and is distinct from the simply 'good' reader:

A good reader is just like you can pick up a piece of paper and it has writing on it you can read it immediately without any trouble but well read is somebody who can probably go through a book and like change languages or whatever (group 6).

The 'well read' reader is 'skilled' in the sense that they can both 'access' a range of texts but also in that they know which texts are 'worth' accessing. The enterprise of the 'well read' reader is thus one of 'orchestrated improvisation' (Colebrook, 1997: 98) as this type of reader reaps symbolic profit through the recognition of and association with particular texts which carry particular cultural currency.

Identifying people who are 'well read'

The students named parents, teachers, grandparents and older siblings as people they perceived to be well read:

John [English teacher]...he's got a lot of knowledge, if you say, if you ask him a question he can refer to so many different pieces of the text and he can say oh

know any of my
friends that read
really not many at
all, I read cos I
do English
When you say

*read what do you
mean?*

M: Like read
books yeah,
people read
newspapers my
male friends
*Is that different
type of reading?*

M: I'd say it was,
you have to
concentrate don't
you when you
read a book
Yeah
I'd say
newspapers it
adds relevance
like you always
have to like skim
through the
newspaper
because you don't
want to miss out
to see if
something major's
happened but like
books no one's
going to be
bothered if you
don't know what's
happened in such
and such a book
It's just general,
if its there you
read it if not you
don't have to,
with a book you
want to read it so
that's why you
start reading it.
So it's more

you can look at this way or you can look at it this way
(group 2)

Yeah my granddad, he went to like the old grammar
school, he can read anything but I don't know anyone
of our age (group 2)

It's our teachers ain't it (group 7)

A: English teacher

B: My sister, she reads all the time (group 3)

Generally the students felt that well read people were
distinct from themselves. Where a fellow student was
identified as 'well read' or a good reader it either carried
negative connotations:

Smart, glasses, more of a geeky person (group 1)

Or was quickly rebuffed if a named student happened to be
present, as in this exchange in group 4:

A: I'd say Louise, she's a good reader she can read
really fast

Louise: I ain't that good at reading

A: But she likes reading books as well

Louise: I don't (defensive tone)

A: You do (emphatic)

Louise, a lively, talkative and confident A level student was
embarrassed and uncomfortable with both the 'good reader'
label and the possibility that others might define her as
someone who enjoyed books. Louise's categorical rejection
of this 'version' of herself resonates with the male
participant's quick, and to the outsider (me) unnecessarily,
defensive qualification of his reading of a broadsheet
newspaper.

Related to the issue of identity is the surprise expressed by

effort to seek it out?

Yeah

So why might male students be less into reading books?

M: well not many are interesting

Do you read because you're an English student?

I do read for fun kind of thing, like my brother he reads and he works so...I don't know many other people

Group 6

B: that's a toughie

A: no, I don't think they do

B: everyone has their own

A: normally when you have the female students they've always got some kind of love novel tucked away somewhere

B: that's stereotyping that is (laughs)

A: no it's not because occasionally you do get ones that read the horror novels and they really enjoy them but the blokes are always with the action and the horror and they rarely read a love story and if

all groups over the survey finding that teachers were a significant influence on students' leisure reading choices. It was felt that the notion of influence had been misunderstood and that influence had been taken to mean coercion or control. They felt it would be true to say that teachers were influential in that they 'made' you read certain things rather than they influenced leisure choices. All groups seemed much more comfortable with the notion that friends were the greatest influence on reading.

The importance and desirability of being 'well read'

The students were invited to consider whether they felt being well read was an important or an attractive thing about a person. In their responses students' equated 'well read' with the kinds of academic and professional success that they aspired to:

A. At this time in the world yes

B. If you're well educated you get a better job

C. Yeah, if you're a business man there's a lot of stuff to read innit, if you're a lawyer you have to be like you know...[well read]

AK: What do you want to be?

C. Businessman

A. Go into pharmacy
(group 1)

Because if you want to go to university you're going to have to read a lot and it would be better if you were used to reading if you weren't used to it it would be a struggle. (group 4)

I think personally just on a one to one it doesn't really make that much difference but when you're going out to work an stuff I think it makes the most difference because erm how are you going to get employment or make friends with the right people? (group 7)

[being well read will help you to] just get the right job and then you can go on from there you know live your life as you want and you can make choices and then it

they do there's something wrong with them

B (laughs)

Why?

A: it's just with romance novels I just find them too soppy and oohhhgg I just can't stand it

Why the difference?

A: it's just kind of taste, blokes like to read big macho books so they can put themselves in the shoes of the hero and the girls just like to read the romantic novels so they can put themselves in the shoes of the girl who's getting some

Would you agree?

B: I'm not sure about the language there (laughs) err yeah because I think it's stereotyped into you from when you're a kid with all the Barbie dolls and everything and he man and stuff like that so.

Group 7

Whatever suits them

Yeah I think I actually read that men are more likely to read

doesn't matter. When you're at the bottom you can't make that many choices if you haven't got money and freedom. (group 7)

Being well read is seen as a means to an end, as serving a practical function mainly concerned with 'access' to particular professional and social identities. Being well-read affords the 'individual' the kinds of intellectual and social capital that it is perceived are needed to 'make friends with the right people' and avoid being at 'the bottom'. Despite the perceived enhanced social and professional status of the well-read person most students were unsure about whether they wanted to take on such identities for themselves. The 'attractiveness' and therefore desirability of being well read was unresolved across the groups, this discussion in group 2 illustrates this:

A. No [it isn't an important thing about a person] because you could have a problem like dyslexia or something which doesn't mean that you're a bad person or that you're not as important.

B. It just means you can't place the words the way other people can

AK: Does being well-read or not well-read affect you when you read college?

B. People think you're a geek or something and that you try too hard, if you have to try hard at school or college you're seen as not popular or something.

C: I think more at school though you're seen as the clever one or the swot then you are labelled swot but at college I think it's different you don't get them kind of labels because everyone is here to work otherwise why would you have to come to college if you didn't want to work? Whereas school is compulsory but college is optional so I don't really agree that you get labelled a swot that's more at school I think.

The issue of desirability remained indeterminate in this group, but it was interesting to see the discursive disruption

science fiction and women are more likely to read stuff that they can relate to, for me I just read everything but things that don't keep my attention that's it

Why were magazines so popular?

Group 1
Just the way we are, we're probably more hyperactive than girls.
Don't take it the wrong way

Group 2
Do you read magazines?
More, I like more I read OK and Empire
And I have to buy the [unclear on tape] for my Nan (*looking at the list of most popular*)
Bliss, I used to I don't any more
I have read Bliss I used to read them more when I was younger
I read FHM because my brother buys it and I just like reading it
Do you buy it every week?

at play. This discussion, which focuses on the reader in the institutional context, is perhaps, indicative of these two students being at different stages in the process of realisation and recognition. Whilst both students recognise that taking on the identity of 'a well read reader' is useful in an academic context, only student B is prepared to accept this as a possible or acceptable subject identity. Student B draws upon a discourse of maturity to account for and explain this. Student A's point about dyslexia makes this exchange particularly interesting, student A suggests that the most desirable reading identities on offer within institutional modalities are more difficult to obtain for students who are also experiencing 'dyslexic identities'. What student A seems to be articulating is that whilst a dyslexic student may recognise the rules, his or her dyslexic identity 'gets in the way' of realising them. This would suggest that the dominant discourses about dyslexia that students might draw on to manage their identities as 'dyslexics' are in tension with the processes which facilitate and enable realisation of the rules about reading and readers.

Again an interesting differential emerged between groups studying at different levels about the desirability of being 'well-read'. GCSE groups tended to understand effectiveness as a reader in highly functional terms, that is to say as a skill for work. A level students were more likely to discuss implicitly or explicitly issues relating to identity. This A2 student in group 5 comments, "I don't think it [being well read] is essential but it would be nice" this is an especially interesting comment in that we see this student detaching 'well read' from the notion of functionality and toying with whether it might be 'nice' to be thought of as well

Not every week
 but if I fancy
 reading
 something or
 Probably
 fortnightly
 Or if I've seen it
 advertised and it
 looks good then I
 will buy it but I
 don't have a rota
 where if it comes
 out that week I
 have to have it
 I tend to buy
 when I go to buy
 my Nan's
 magazines so I
 tend to buy it
 every fortnight
 when it comes out
*Do your mums or
 family buy
 magazines that
 you read or
 share?*
 If I buy
 magazines then
 my mum will
 If I leave
 magazines around
 the house then
 my brothers 'll
 read them and
 then they'll say
 they didn't really
 because they
 don't want to be
 seen with a
 women's magazine
*They don't want
 to be seen
 reading More?*
 Mmm but they do
 (laughs)
*Why do you
 choose the
 magazines that
 you do?*
 What stories

read, this contrasts with the GCSE student who says "it's probably good to have [but] you can't really tell someone's a good reader from their personality because it doesn't really make much difference to their personality" (group 1). Here the A level student, like her peer in group 7 who mentions "making friends with the right people", is acknowledging that 'being a reader' is not only about practical advantage but about a way of seeing and being seen, a way of acquiring 'capital'. A co-discussant in group 7 expresses this in its inverse, to the question is being well-read an attractive thing about a person a female student in group 7 responds:

Not if they intimidate you or make you feel inferior but if you're like on the same level then...(tapers out) if they know so much and the fact that you don't know that much at all...[can] make you feel small.

For this student taking a position as a 'well-read person' expresses and exercises power through the articulation of particular positioning/s (own and others) within the diagrammatic of capital acquisition. Her own 'situatedness' within such modalities is, she feels, insecure making her feel vulnerable to those who are ready to mobilise their enhanced capital stake to her detriment. The insecurity this student articulates might be understood in Bourdieu's terms: "the holders of educationally uncertified cultural capital can always be required to prove themselves, because they *are* only what they *do*" (2002: 23).

On making meanings - thinking through 'what happens when you read'?

When tackling the question 'what happens when you read?' all groups were less forthcoming with responses than they had been with previous questions. Typical initial responses

that they've got in them, because I read OK and Empire you know the cinema magazine and if it's got a film that I read about then I buy it or if it's got a celebrity that I'm interested in then I'll buy it I think I buy my magazines because I've read them in the past and I find them interesting the articles they do they interest me Yeah, you're used to them ain't ya Yeah They don't, like More I thought it was just a celebrity magazine but it's not they do some really good articles, really good issues *What kinds of things?* They've done stuff on like robbers and what you can do, and all kinds of thing, drugs, anorexia they've done all kind of good different subject and they're not afraid to say what they think which is good *Strong opinions, you like that?*

were:

Err you open a book, you start reading (group 1)

I think it's just processing the words so that you know, I don't know it's really hard because it just happens straightaway, you just can't slow it down you just understand it straightaway. (group 2)

You start from the top and work your way down! (group 7)

Although I acknowledge that this is a difficult, challenging and very open question, it is also possible that this was the first time that some participants had addressed this type of question, which would perhaps account for the uncharacteristic degree of reticence displayed by most participants at this point in the discussions. As argued above none of the sixteen to nineteen English or literacy syllabus documents encourage a reflexive exploration of reading practices and processes, tending to prefer, as also discussed above, mastery of content and taken for granted ways of knowing about texts, readers and reading. The participants therefore seemed to have no 'learned' discursive resources on which to draw to make sense of this question and they turned instead to the 'common sense' of authoring, mobilising the ideological constructed notion of the author identified by Foucault and discussed above.

The degree of interaction between the participants and me shifts notably in the majority of the transcripts at this point and I felt conscious of the need to re-phrase and re-shape the question and to offer additional prompts or sub-questions.

The initial confusion this question caused tended to be

Mmm
Are there particular sections that you'll automatically go to?
 Yeah the funny things, like the confessions and stuff, I love those the back page I always go straight to the back page
What's on the back page?
 True confessions I think
Do you read the same magazines as your friends?
 Well I don't read More
 I've never really discussed it with my friends we don't talk about magazines
 We don't really talk about it
So is it quite an individual thing to do?
 Yeah, unless you see an article that you think is interesting and you think they'd be interested in the same thing
 Yeah maybe but not just everyday stuff about it
 If I left a magazine lying around and my friend comes round I'll pick it up and we'll have

followed by a 'pictures in the head' explanation of the reading process:

A: You're getting pictures from the words

AK: How does that work?

A: Erm well like, they describe something, the book will say 'big green overgrown monster' and you just have to get that image in your head of a big green monster, pretty tall...(trails off) (group 1)

You get a picture in your head what's happening (group 4)

It's like it's a film someone starts speaking and you imagine someone speaking. They describe a character and you've got that. (group 5)

...in a book, depending on what kind it is whether it's fiction or science fiction or fantasy when you're reading the book as soon as you open it up, well what some people say is that you're entering another world, when you're reading you're using your imagination to put yourself in that book, in that position so you can see what is going on exactly. (group 6)

You kind of see them in your head like pictures of what's happening (group 7)

The 'pictures in the head' notion identifies a reader ('you'), an author ('they') and an experience, 'the text' which is shared between the two.

The choice of the pronoun 'you' here is important as it suggests that the speaker is distancing his or herself from the process of making meaning. Discussants preferred the second person to construct a narrative in which the 'author' or creator of text acted on 'the reader' to achieve particular responses. This conceives a highly directive relationship between reader and writer:

They want you to put yourself in a certain situation like the September 11th bombings: they wanted you to be

a laugh at something or whatever but ordinarily I think you buy a magazine and it's time for yourself to sit down and read and just have some peace and quiet And if you've read something about a celebrity or something and you think that's juicy and you want to tell your mates or something then maybe like that but...

Generally on your own? You don't sit around a copy?

Nah

Nah (all laugh)

What we might do, if someone's brought a newspaper in maybe we might all sit there and look through a newspaper and all be reading the horoscopes out to each other, but that's it

But not really magazines is it?

So it's more newspapers that you read together?

Yeah because we're all in the canteen or we're all on the bus together or you

there, they wanted you to feel the pain of the people who were there. I don't think they're pushing you but they're trying to help you to understand the situation because you could actually take it as it is, they want to help you (group 5)

This constructs the reader as one who must come to know what it is that the writer knows already. Reading in these terms is an acquisitive experience through which the reader might come to know more, from darkness to enlightenment.

In the comment below the inclusion of 'just' serves to minimise the function and purpose of the reader within the processes of making and taking meaning:

You're just scanning for questions of why the writers written it and what's it all about and what's the story about. (group 3)

The author's, in particular the published author's, 'claim' to textual meaning is often uncontested. Discussants consistently chose not to claim a first person role for themselves in their own narratives about how reading 'works', rather they understood themselves as 'in receipt' of a 'message' which needed to be understood in order to better understand it's originator – the originator's right to be understood remained unquestioned. One is minded of Foucault's notion of the author functioning as an ideological product (1991) discussed above:

...the functional principle by which in our culture one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction. In fact, we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual sign of invention... (1991:119)

Issues relating to, sometimes expressed as concern about, 'understanding' and or 'misunderstanding' the 'message' permeate the transcripts, suggesting perhaps an

just think that
looks interesting

Group 3

Don't, I used to
when I was
younger read
football

*What made you
stop?*

They get boring

F: Occasional
ones, not on a
regular basis not
like every singe
week just
occasionally I
read musical ones
to do with
different bands I
like and that but
When you go to
the hairdressers
and there's
nothing else to do

Group 4

Yeah (all)

Why choose?

If you see
something that
you like

Like the life
stories it makes
you feel better
about yourself

Like 'I was
pregnant at 12
and survived'
thank god that's
not me

*Do you read any
of these?*

More, Bliss,

Sugar, J17

Do you buy?

Yeah (all)

Not every time
they come out,
just when I've got

acquiescence to this discursive construction of 'an author'.

Answers to this question tended to be characterised by more frequent use of fillers, "erm, er", "like", and were less fluent and coherent than at other points in the transcripts suggesting a hesitancy and tentativeness that isn't so noticeable in their answers to other questions. Gee's notion of how reading is learned in schools perhaps offers a way of interrogating and interpreting this. Gee argues that the teaching of reading fixates on "reading as silently saying the sounds of letters and words and being able to answer general, factual and dictionary like questions about written texts" (Gee, 2003: 16). This, he contends, engenders readers who can de-code but not really read:

You do have to silently say the sounds of letters and words when you read (or, at least, this greatly speeds up reading). You do have to be able to answer general, factual, and dictionarylike questions about what you read: This means you know the "literal" meaning of the text. But what so many people – unfortunately so many educators and policymakers – fail to see is that if this is all you can do, then you can't really read. You will fail to be able to read well and appropriately in contexts associated with specific types of texts and specific types of social practice. (Gee, 2003:16)

Whilst readers may then feel comfortable with literal meanings they may be less sure about the other ways in which texts mediate the meaning of social situations that is to say the practices of reading as manifest in the language or literacy *classroom*.

Unlike with other questions a high degree of hegemony was evident across the groups in their answers to this question. This was often explored through comparing 'reading' books

money
 Or there's
 nothing else to do
*Do you borrow
 other peoples?*
 Yeah my sister's,
 yes hers (laugh)
 Yeah we read
 together
 Yeah problem
 pages we read
 them aloud on the
 bus because
 they're funny
*Can you describe
 an example?*
 Teenage
 Boys,
 relationships
 and they're
 always on about
 your body and
 how you shouldn't
 be ashamed
*Are those things
 that interest
 you?*
 Sometimes they
 have like babyish
 stuff in don't
 they
*What's babyish
 stuff?*
 Like oh I don't
 know, they have
 some really naff
 clothes in there
 and they say it's
 fashionable and
 you just don't
 believe it
*So you don't
 believe all the
 stuff you read in
 there?*
 No (all)
 Most of the
 problems are just
 made up I think
 Yeah

with 'watching' films or TV:

If it's on TV there's only one way you can take it because there's only one way to portray it unless it's like a documentary or something. If it's like a soap then they're telling you a story so it can be told one way. (group 2)

You can picture in your head what's happening [when you read a book] but that's only if you get into it though, if you don't get into it the words start to slip out of your mind, they just go in one side and out the other (group 4)

Because when you're reading you can picture it how you wanna picture it but if you're watching a film the pictures are already there for you (group 4)

With both kinds of text 'meaning' is seen to inhabit a space 'outside' the reader. But unlike making sense of TV or film the meaning of books is seen as less easy to pin down in the sense that the author's meaning is sometimes difficult to 'grasp'. The possibility of multiple meanings is explained either as straightforward 'getting it wrong':

It [a film] actually shows you what happens instead of describing it to you, because some people might misinterpret the writing and get the wrong picture, they might not get the picture the writer was trying to put forward. (group 1)

With respondents often ready to take responsibility for 'misinterpretations', or as the effect of individual subjects encountering sensations, textual experience, to which they might have different responses:

Everyone has a different imagination, a different view of everything (group 1)

AK: What is it about us that makes us see different things?

A: good question (laughs)

Do you read music
or film?

I read Q and
NME

I've read woman's
own when I was
really bored in
the bath, it's my
mum's and I've
read Elle which is
my sisters
I've read Hello.
Celebrities and
interesting
stories like I
don't buy it
regularly

There's a lot of
men's magazines
in here, like For
Him. I've actually
read that one
before (FHM)
before they're
not actually,
because you just
think of naked
women but I've
actually read
FHM and it's got
a few naked
pages but you
just don't turn
over that page
because in like O
magazine you
have half naked
men don't you but
you just take no
notice and most
of them are
women articles

*So not
necessarily only
for men? Would
you buy?
Wouldn't buy max*

B: we are all insane

C: I guess it's just the imagination (group 6)

Different interpretations are anecdotal and infinite,
dependent upon 'imagination'. Imagination is understood
as being shaped by:

experiences, your surroundings, it could just be your
college or the people around you so if you had like
let's say an area just full of erm one type of race then
you might just picture that sort of but if you're in a
multi-culture [environment] you might picture things
differently (group 7)

Although this comment seems to pick up on what might be
described as structural differences between the positioning
of individuals to texts, the differences listed are given equal
weighting suggesting a randomness of impact or effect.

Here the individual is at the centre of her/his environment
rather than in dialogic relation to the structures within which
s/he (always, already) situates and is situated. The
curriculum, and the roles and definitions it embraces and
constructs¹⁸ for students as readers (and writers) are by
contrast absolutes floating freely beyond the structures
within which individuals are seen to be placed. Thus whilst
the meaning-making of individuals is contingent, the
curriculum contexts within which meaning-making (must)
occur are seen as neutral.

Thus whilst participants did express an awareness of
different reading practices:

[What happens when you read?] It probably depends
on like what subject you've taken at college sometimes
you're just taught to skim read and pick out the
important things but in history I'm told you've got to
read everything because everything's important. So it

¹⁸ Kelly (2000) adopts the term 'total curriculum' which is intended to embrace the total dynamics of
the educational setting

power
*Why boys
 interested in
 cars?*
 Don't know, they
 haven't got
 nothing else have
 they? They've got
 their cars and
 that's it (all
 laugh)
*So what have you
 got?*
 You've got your
 clothes aint you,
 you got I don't
 know
 Make up,
 jewellery because
 chaps aren't
 interested into
 jewellery and
 stuff like that
 But my
 boyfriends got a
 really naff car
 Does it matter to
 you what car?
 Well it's this
 metro and the
 licence plate says
 ho on it and it's
 embarrassing (all
 laugh)

Group 5
 Yeah
 Yeah I'm always
 reading them
*You don't buy a
 paper do you buy
 a magazine?*

Yeah (lots)
 I used to but I
 don't anymore I
 can't be bothered
 and I read books
 Why do you

depends what you're reading like if you're reading a book you don't skim read it because you've got to pick out the details but if you're reading something like for English for analysis you skim read it to pick out the big words (group 2)

They did not attach a 'politics' to these different choices or demands, neither did they see them as social practices organising power relations between different subject identities within disciplinary groups, rather they saw and accepted them as a simple common sense of varying subject disciplines. Furthermore different reading practices were not understood to impact on possibilities for meaning taking and making.

Recognition, realisation, resistance – students assessing Passmore's anxiety

The further up the academic hierarchy students were located seemed to impact significantly on the ways in which they chose to express and manage their identities as readers. When asked to consider whether or not Passmore had a right to be concerned about students choosing not to read fiction in their leisure time responses were markedly differentiated by the qualification level of the participants. Whilst GCSE students seemed comfortable with challenging Passmore:

It's up to students if they want to read or not (group 1)

Everyone's got their own opinions and they can do what they wanna do and if they wanna read then they'll read (group 3)

With some participants prepared to dispute a value system that privileges the novel over other types of reading:

choose magazines you choose Celebrities, well I don't buy them very often but when my sister comes home I go up to my sisters like she shares, she's living with 3 other girls and like they have which magazine they buy each week and then in the flat there'll be five different ones in so I can like anything [unclear].

What appeals to you?

They're like aimed at our age so if it goes on about fashion and stuff it will mention shops that we shop in *What you do in college is aimed at you how is it different?*

It's not so much aimed at us but at our age group more than the English is aimed at us English students, so it's something that we can relate to in our life, the clothes that they buy are from shops that we would go to and if we don't we hey I should try that shop out.

It doesn't matter if you read novels as long as you can read. If you read magazines or just small books that aren't exactly like 1000 pages long it doesn't really matter if you read novels (group 6).

A/S and A2 students were more sympathetic to and tolerant of Passmore's viewpoint and generally expressed views that suggested they had recognised the preferred identities of the curriculum. Resonant of Gallik, cited above, a correlate was drawn between reading fiction and intelligence and the symbolic capital of 'heritage' texts was readily asserted:

I think in a way [it's good to read fiction] because if you look at all the fiction writing that we've got there is a lot of good pieces like Shakespeare and stuff and that's all fiction and I think it does have a lot to do with intelligence and it's like history you've got to know this stuff as well it's like compulsory at school because you need to get it in there. (group 2)

Fiction was perceived to enable the reader to access the wider truth of human experience:

I think it is [important to read fiction] because it, there's a variety of subjects in each book, a variety of topics which means that when people read fiction they're gonna learn more about the world because there's lots of different things going on (group 4),

And to represent a perhaps more robust, demanding way of reading:

Reading fiction gives them a completely different angle and it's completely different to reading magazines so like if suppose you're not used to reading a fiction book and you're constantly reading magazines and then you pick one up [a fiction book] you'd probably be quite shocked if you're not used to reading it. (group 5)

The A/S and A2 students were also more ready to situate themselves within a discourse of enrichment, seemingly even where this means situating themselves, as readers

Do you? More female

M: I'd say it was, No, I've got a lot of bloke friends who buy magazines like music and computers and stuff

M: actually I do know people who buy music magazines where you get free CDs and stuff with them

My brother buys the car ones

How are male and

female magazines

different?

Girls have got more gossip haven't they?

Yeah

And talk about what's been happening

And blokes are more like, on their computer games and I don't know stuff like that that just don't interest me

Do you read any

of these?

More, yeah

I used to read Sugar and Bliss when I was about 12

Which sections

do you like?

I read the

who tend not to choose fiction, in less institutionally powerful positions. As hinted at by findings of the reading habits survey their greater likelihood to own books, read newspapers and perhaps be less influenced by peers when making choices about reading, it would seem that they are more ready to acquiesce to the identities of institutional modalities than their GCSE counterparts who express more resistance to both the realities and practicalities of these identities and the people who represent them, of Passmore group 6 commented:

A. She's a moany old tart

B. She's probably read loads of books

A. Or she's probably like really upper class so she thinks like everyone who doesn't read novels is like lower (group 6)

This exchange is interesting because we see student A expressing an understanding that different social groups exercise power on and against each other but we also see student A rejecting and resisting the identities of the more powerful group. By contrast, more 'successful' higher achieving (A/S / S2) students were more likely, as demonstrated above, to see advantages in embracing the identities of the 'right people in the right groups' and were therefore less likely to remonstrate against those inhabiting more institutionally powerful positionings.

problem pages
(laugh)
Do you share

magazines?

Yeah when my
sister's home
there's always
magazines around
she just buys
loads at a time

*Do you read
together?*

Yeah you bring
them in and
everybody reads
them

Do you read

aloud?

Yes, the problem
page (laughs)

Do you learn

anything?

Gossip pages, it's
just to relax innit
It's nothing
serious

They just get you
out of your own
life

*Do you take much
of it seriously?*

No, I don't think
you do because if
you did you
wouldn't laugh at
the problems
would you (laughs)

Scene 4

Managing the self – legitimate literacy and ethics

These readings make it possible to see the literacy curriculum as a disciplining technology harnessed to discipline the 'unruly' (feminised) subject in particular kinds of ways. The acquiescing student is understood to be 'achieving', is labelled successful and is permitted license, through the framing mandates of 'qualification', to ascend the hierarchy of qualifications towards becoming specialist. The resistant student, in contrast, will not meet the criteria through which framing describes achievement, this student is therefore 'under-achieving' and is unable to 'qualify' to move through the sequencing processes permitted within the elaborated code as it is manifested within the FE context. The resistant student may not only be denied the right to become specialist but will be denied the right to 'move' at all within a vertical qualifications framework that allows only a linear progression. The underachieving student is positioned in the shadowlands of 'la culture libre' (Bourdieu, 2002) with their claims to legitimate and institutionally powerful identities much reduced. Through this "state of domination" (Gauntlett, 2000:283) acts of resistance (being other) are diffused and "neuter[ed]" (Irigaray, 1993:21).

At the same time students' resistance, particularly the resistance of 'underachieving' students, offers exciting challenges for teachers. It is these acts of dissent that make visible the constructed-ness of the elaborated code, the fragility and temporality of 'moments' of classification and framing, and illuminate the constant work that must be done by classificatory technologies (of which teachers and curricula are constituting) towards the project of 'insulating'. Here Bourdieu relates how this process is enacted in the teaching of legitimate language:

...the legitimate language is a semi-artificial language which has to be sustained by a permanent effort of correction, a task which falls both to institutions specially designed for this purpose and to individual

speakers. Through its grammarians, who fix and codify legitimate language usage, and its teachers who impose and inculcate it through innumerable acts of correction, the educational system tends, in this area as elsewhere, to produce the need for its own services and its own products.(1991: 60)

Whilst it is at these points that the fabrication of the elaborated code may be glimpsed it is also at these points that teachers might be invited to peer 'outside' (and into, towards the abyss?) to imagine new possibilities and desires for knowing and doing literacies education. Such possibilities seem to offer opportunities for making new meanings for/about/with the 'feminised reader' that resonate with Butler's aspirations 'to contest the reification of gender and identity' (1990:5) where 'gendering' might be understood as the process of making more or less powerful as in the feminisation metaphors drawn (variously) above. Here gender trouble is evoked as a grammar of possibility, as a 'political wing' of post-structuralism that might work to destabilise the binaries that constitute the kinds of curriculum values and identities that guarantee lower status positionings for those subjects who are unable or unwilling to draw down a profit of distinction.

I am drawn to note here that teachers must take responsibility, as Gee (2002) urges, for framing criticality and reflexivity with discussions about 'risk', I take up a discussion of risk below but wish to flag here my contention that consideration of risk must be a central priority, indeed responsibility, for teachers engaged in the kinds of acts of critical pedagogy glimpsed here and elsewhere in this thesis.

Re-reading the 'data' and responses to the data – a case for optimism?

It is possible that there is much in the findings of the reading habits survey, for teachers, traditionalists included, to be optimistic about. There is much evidence to suggest that reading for pleasure/leisure comprises a regular and valued aspect of the social lives of respondents and that they engage by choice and preference with an interesting and sometimes eclectic variety of text. They are generally confident about their skills as readers and are not

overly influenced by any one factor when it comes to making choices about what they prefer to read.

Although these findings do seem to suggest that teachers are right to assert that students prefer, and are most likely to read magazines and tabloids (local and national) and that reading seems not to be at the top of their list of leisure time activities, it is in making sense of and responding to these particular findings that we need to exercise most caution. A sensible response requires re-evaluation of how students' self-selected reading is perceived and valued and must challenge the (perhaps nearest to hand) reference points that conventional and dominant discourses have weaved into a common sense about reading.

Indeed in many ways the responses of this cohort suggest that they are fairly conservative in their choices of reading and do not, as we are sometimes led to believe, prefer virtual/visual to print-based text and in many ways they seem rather traditional in their choice of medium.

Bean's notion of 'functionality' (1999) is useful for thinking through the first of these issues. Bean argues the need to better understand how adolescents view the functions of in school and out of school literacy and uses the term 'functionality' to:

suggest that activities we engage in serve some valued purpose in our lives. These may range from efforts to forge social identity as an adolescent to accomplishing an academic or athletic career. Functionality...implies that adolescents have a sense of purpose and agency in their actions (Bean, 1999:442)

Thus reading habits might be seen to reflect purposeful choices and decision-making about issues that are central to the lives and understandings of readers. Bean argues for broader definitions of adolescent literacy that embrace the functions of reading and writing in young people's lives, thus the personal function of reading magazines for the young woman quoted in Bean's research 'just for fun...to learn stuff. I read stuff I'm interested

in...related to my life' (1999:445) might be valued and embraced as such. Failure to do this not only obscures key facets of adolescent literacy but, warns Bean may engender a:

sharp divide between the culture of the school and the students who are stakeholders in a school, students may choose to reject the official curriculum.(1999:446)

He concludes that:

until we bridge the gap by tapping the multiple literacies in adolescent lives, we will continue to see adolescents develop a disinterested cognitive view of in-school literacy functions and a more enthusiastic view of out-of-school discourse functions. (1999:447)

This leads into the second issue of how we think about the process of reading. I argue that we need to see a move away from text-centred teaching about reading towards post-structuralist understandings (see for example Peim, 1993 for notions of curriculum informed by post-structuralism and for practical suggestions) that allow us to think about texts in more complex ways, enabling a wider definition of 'text' and and what it means to 'read' text (Buckingham, 1993). This might liberate us from the circular debates about the differences between the tastes and preferences of different groups of readers – Bourdieu's (1991) notions of habitus and field would suggest that such differences are inevitable and unavoidable – and move us towards a more critical positioning from which we might consider how to make sense of the texts we encounter. In this way whilst we cannot – and neither would we want to – control what our students choose to read we might at least ensure that they approach everything they read with a criticality that is both questioning and demanding. This might mean helping them 'to describe, observe and analyse different literacies rather than just learning and teaching the one literacy [school/college literacy] as given' (Street 1997:54) which might in turn encourage new debates about the structure and content of existing curricula and the sets of values it serves to construct and maintain.

INTERJECTION - reflection on Method

Some key differences were discernible between the two sets of 'data' that emerged from the reading habits survey and the focus group discussions that suggest that participants chose to manage their subject identities differently within the different modalities offered by the differing data collection methods. The responses to what do you read and who influences your reading exemplify these significant differences.

In the reading habits survey participants reported that teachers were an important influence on their reading. They also reported having read a substantial number of novels in the weeks before completing the survey and many of these were at least resonant of the GCSE and A level 'set texts' lists. These particular findings baffled and confused the focus group participants who tended to express scepticism about their validity.

From the point of view of 'triangulation' this poses an interesting dissonance that might, in traditional, scientific terms raise questions about the validity of either data set. A more traditional research approach might therefore set to 'resolving' such disharmony. Such an approach might attempt to eliminate dissonance, by methods like 'triangulation' whereby additional data increases the likelihood of one or other data-set being more 'valid', or explain it perhaps through a re-evaluation and critique of the methodological approach to data collection. The problem with either kind of approach is the assumption, problematised above, that the 'truth' of the object of investigation is an obtainable possibility disrupted and obstructed only by the mechanics (corruption?) of method. The condition of possibility of an understanding of 'dissonance as problem' can be seen as contingent to a particular paradigmatic viewpoint. Liberated from the possibility of 'truth' as fixed point a post-structuralist position enables a more tolerant response to dissonance by forcing a different, more reflexive, kind of questioning: not 'which of my results is true?' so much as 'why do different kinds of research processes yield different kinds of answers?' Here I consider this latter kind of question by re-

focusing theoretical frameworks from the mechanics of research to the modalities of practice within research is undertaken.

Drawing on Bernstein's model of the elaborated code and post-modern (after Foucault) notions of the ways in which subjects are situated by and situating within discourse in the project of managing 'self', I offer a brief comparison of the research evidence produced by the reading habits survey and the focus group to consider the ways in which the identities permitted and legitimised within each modality may have impacted on the decisions participants made about management of self at particular moments.

Method A : The reading habits survey

The questionnaire was administered in colleges by the regular class teacher in the students' usual classroom setting. Students answered individually and quietly in 'exam-like' conditions. The 'researcher', was absent from the encounter and identified as a student at the University of Birmingham undertaking research for a PhD.

This was an experience with strong internal classification and framing had strong internal values. The contextual framing, the relationship and power dynamic between the researcher and student, is clearly established as subject/object mediated through the internal framing of the educational system in general (they are A level students, I am a PhD student) and the classroom in particular within which, as has been established above, particular discursive constructions of reading and the reader are dominant. Thus it is possible that students recognised that particular reading identities were more desirable in this context and thus they managed their responses to reflect the highest available profit yield, that is to say when they found themselves in an examination type scenario they worked with the survey to produce what Fawns and Ivanic, cited above, call the "form self" a "regimented version of who we are, made official and concrete by being committed to paper. However...this 'form' self is usually an inadequate depiction of a person's true sense of their 'true self', showing how our identity changes according to

situation and according to the socially constructed identities which are made available to us (Fawns and Ivanic 2001: 90). Thus it may be that the frequency with which set texts and authors from the literary heritage are cited may be explained as students indexing their responses closely to both internal (teachers) and external (Passmore's) classificatory values.

Method B: The focus group

In this context classification and framing shifted considerably. The focus groups were small, friendship groups who responded voluntarily to a personal, verbal invitation from me to participate in the study. We moved out of the classroom context, away from the regular teacher and I specifically articulated my detachment from both the college and their classroom contexts. On the mornings of the interviews I thought carefully about how I presented myself to the students and attempted to dress in ways that would distinguish me from the more formal dress of their regular teachers.

In this context framing and classification were indexed more to the social relations *between* students, rather than the relations between the individual student, me as the researcher, and the institution. In this context it is possible that whilst the institution hosted the physical event, the discussions took place within the college buildings, but without perhaps framing the content. This is illustrated for example by the discussions about gender and reading in which understanding of male and female readers draw heavily upon non-institutional, curricula discourses. Equally the students seemed 'freed-up' to reject the institutionally imposed reading identities, which might be represented by for example the novel, and express preferences for magazines and newspaper. Certainly the balance between the latter two reading activities, novels and magazines, shifts considerably between the first and second data sets. Indeed it is possible that these informal peer group discussions engendered new elaborated codes, for Bernstein (2002) the idea of the elaborated code is not confined to the educational transaction, organised around the popular, informal, social cultures, *La culture libre*, illegitimate extra-curricular cultures (Bourdieu, 2002: 25) and Passmore's

'other', within which student's managed their behaviour according to their assessments of profit, loss and their sensitivities to risk.

Risk? A critical question

What is unclear from the above analyses and what has not been probed through this project is the participants' understandings of 'risk', that is to say the potential risks involved in rejecting legitimate ways of knowing. It is possible to see that some of the participants were rejecting preferred, higher status identities but to what extent were they aware of the potential cost? How informed was their position taking?

Gee (2000: 67) argues that all students, but most especially "minority and poor children" have a "moral right" to four forms of integrated instruction:

- Situated practice
- Overt instruction – reflexive and meta-aware
- Critical framing
- Right to transform and produce knowledge

The third of these, critical framing, is central to the notion of risk. By critical framing Gee means:

Ways of coming to know where in the overall system you stand. How does what you are learning relate to other domains? Where in the overall system of knowledge and social relations does the language and knowledge you are learning stand? (Ibid. 68)

Gee argues that critical framing is a central entitlement for poor and minority children as they may be more likely to have:

heretofore been excluded from the experiences that would allow them to contextualise school-based, specialist, academic, and public-sphere forms of language (ibid. 67).

For these students then 'knowing where you stand' must be about more than recognition and realisation of the values of the elaborated code where Bernstein argues "power is never more fundamental as far as communication

is concerned than when it acts on the distribution of recognition rules” (2002: 17). Rather it must be about knowing the “design grammar of the field” (Gee, 2003: 32) and deciding where you are, where you might be or whether you might like to re-shape and re-model the field. Clearly the latter choice is the highest risk but it is nevertheless a choice that must be made available to learners if learning is to be either critical or inclusive.

The learner must see and appreciate the semiotic domain as a design space, internally as a system of interrelated elements making up the possible content of the domain and externally as ways of thinking, acting and interacting, and valuing that constitutes the identities of those people who are members of the affinity group associated with the domain. (Gee, 2003: 4)

In this way participants can choose to become ‘designers’ playing at the edges to create new possibilities and identities for themselves and others like themselves. Arguably without risk-taking dominant and legitimate symbolic markets and the ways in which they situate particular groups of participants remain unchallenged. Clearly then risk is a question that all educators must grapple with both in terms of their own professional identities and practices and the ways in which they frame and facilitate the educational experience of students.

The following chapters take up these issues through a consideration of the pedagogic and social justice implications of competing models of literacies and through an exploration of literacy identities.

Act 5

Reading and

Identity

We have to forget the desire to draw a flow diagram showing how personalities are 'formed', and try another approach. (Gauntlett, 2002: 18)

To what extent and in what ways are individual views of self also connected to ways in which society views and gives meaning to writing and other literacy practices – to ways that it socially constructs the accepted values, functions, and mediums of literacy? In what ways – and at what cultural price tags – are personal identities formed, in part, by these social constructs of literacy? (Mahiri and Godley 1998: 416)

The students' responses explored above to '*what is a good reader*', '*is reading important*' and '*is it attractive or important to be well read*' raised important questions about methodology which relate directly back to Bernstein's notion that preferred identities are both made available and 'policed' within particular modalities of practice. My reflections on the data yielded by differing methodologies opened up an exploration of these issues and in this section I continue this enquiry by asking what kinds of identities do subjects construct for themselves and how do they situate themselves within and without institutionally powerful discourses about what it means to be a reader?

What becomes clear from the analysis above is that members of the institutional community situate themselves within and without institutional definitions of readers and reading as they manage their own senses within different contexts and for different audiences. Reading and being a reader forms part of the story individuals tell about themselves and the stories that are, in turn, told about them to situate them in particular kinds of ways within particular (and overlapping) domains of practice and their differing codes and modalities – for example peer and social contexts, institutional and academic contexts, gender groupings.

Taking post-structuralist notions of 'self' as a starting point where "self identity is bound up with a 'capacity to keep a particular narrative going'" (Gauntlett, 1991: 54) I explore in this section the expressed trajectories of 'individual identities' in relation to institutionally powerful notions of reading and readers through participants' narrations of their reading histories. What is important here is not the *realities* or *truth* of experience or action but the ways in which discourses about reading and reader identities are selected (through ethical, in Foucault's sense, consideration?) and mobilised to tell a story ('true' perhaps for (and only at) the moment of utterance) about self. Drawing on the analysis above I argue two things, firstly that through these stories subjects may seek, consciously/unconsciously, to situate their subjectivities within and without institutional identities to consolidate particular aspirations and desires

that are indexed most explicitly to more powerful positionings and secondly that subjects are concurrently situated through their storytelling.

In this section I also invited non-student members of the college to share their stories so as to allow for comparative analysis.

A note on data collection

The data collection method utilised in this part of the project was intended to offer a contrast to the modalities of the survey and the focus group discussions so as to enable further reflexive analysis of methodological processes. I invited students and staff at the same Black Country colleges where I had undertaken the focus group work to participate in individual storytelling. The sample was to be voluntary and self-selecting and my aspiration was to involve ten participants in total.

Whereas much of my earlier data had been collected prior to my encounters with Bernstein's ideas leaving thereby only a retrospective opportunity for reflection on the effect of elaborated codes this final part of the research afforded the opportunity to think carefully about the specifics of the elaborated code I was inviting respondents to participate in. I was keen to provide here a contrasting set of relations to those considered above and particularly wanted to ensure that internal framing was weak. I attempted to achieve this by removing both the framing contexts of the teacher and the architectural, material and codified structures of the college, and the physical presence of me as a researcher, and representative of those codified institutional practices.

Participants were given a cassette tape and written list of prompts to 'direct' the movement of their stories from early childhood through to the present. They were then asked to talk to the tape in response to the prompts (see appendix 7) adding more or less as they felt it appropriate. They were advised to use the prompts for guidance only and were invited to wander into issues

and areas not covered by the prompts or alternatively to ignore aspects that they felt to be irrelevant.

Initially I had wanted to offer less guidance so as to avoid the imposition of a linear movement through the story – this would have yielded a further layer of analysis around the construction and shape of the storytelling. However the teacher advisor¹⁹ who had reviewed the draft instructions had felt that some of the student participants would feel more comfortable with a greater degree of guidance. Guidance prompts were therefore more comprehensive than had initially been intended although the language used was negotiative, “you might choose to” or “please feel free to ignore or edit”, with a strong emphasis on choice rather than prescription. I hope this encouraged a freedom of response and the transcripts do suggest that participants felt free to skip questions in a way that an interview may have made more difficult for them. At the social level, for example, Grice’s (1975) ideas about polite conversation may have prompted particular kinds of responses as participants felt obligated by cultural norms to acquiesce to conversational maxims of politeness, giving an answer where they may have preferred not to or filling a silence that felt uncomfortable.

However these stories were extremely difficult to collect and my first invitation to participate resulted in no student volunteers and three staff volunteers. I persevered with a second invitation and two students, Sarah and Meena, came forward to participate. Although I was disappointed and frustrated by this process it raises questions that are central to the concerns of this thesis. If ‘educational research’ constructs and exercises its own elaborated codes then how are teachers and learners differently situated within and by these? A possible reading might be that staff, already more powerfully positioned to legitimate discourses within these modalities of practice, and who may also through the process of symbolic imposition claim as *entitlement* expertise in specialist fields of which they have little or no experience, inevitably feel more

¹⁹ The Head of English at the institution, James, had worked in an advisory capacity throughout the project and had participated in earlier focus groups and fed back on previous drafts and methodological processes.

comfortable about taking up the kinds of identities that the elaborated code of research makes available. Equally this same positioning may 'empower' teachers to 'declaim' the outcomes of research that they feel uncomfortable with, or unconvinced by in ways that the 'inexpert' student *may* not. In short perhaps the 'risk' of participating is significantly reduced for teachers.

The same argument may be made for teachers' situatedness to common sense ideas about reading. If, as is argued above, schooled *literacies* often stand in for a common sense definition of *literacy* then it is inevitable that colleagues with teaching or teaching related contracts will feel more at ease with the subject of reading regardless of a researcher's (my) attempt to open up or challenge definitions. Equally it is possible that my attempts to weaken internal framing may have had the opposite to the intended affect. In an ironic twist it is possible that this endeavour may have served to devalue the project by rendering participation as value-less within the strongly internally framed reference points that students and teachers invoke, as discussed above, when they make meanings about reading, readers and texts.

Telling self through reading: three tapestries

My objective for more than twenty years has been to sketch out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves: economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology. The main point is not to accept this knowledge at face value but to analyse these so-called sciences as very specific 'truth games' related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves. (Foucault, 2000: 224)

Here I explore the auto-ethnographic accounts of three readers, Meena who is re-taking her GCSE English having not achieved a C grade at school, Sarah following an A level programme and Thomas a learning support tutor and IT champion. In particular I am interested in the ways that institutionally endorsed reading practices might be mobilised towards the management of self and the exercising of power both within and without the institutional domain.

Meena

Meena introduces herself as:

a student and I study GCSE English Maths and Science. I went straight to college after I left high school. My experience at high school was that I enjoyed every moment of it

She is seventeen and describes her ethnicity as Indian. Her father is a supervisor, although she doesn't say in what context, and her mother is a machinist. She offers a short, matter-of-fact response to the questions totalling only 226 words. Throughout her transcript she is keen to express her approval of schooled experience, suggesting recognition of the need to accept the preferred identities of the modality within which she finds herself:

What are the earliest memories of learning to read? I used to read at home and at school and every moment I could get. I enjoyed reading.

She expresses an enjoyment of reading but tends to reference this back to her schooled experience:

I used to get the books from school and I used to read with a teacher and then I used to come home and read with my dad.

In Meena's account books, like knowledge about reading, are sourced from school:

When I was secondary school everyone had to read out loud a paragraph so that the teacher would know where we were in our reading skills

And Meena acquiesces to the teacher's right to 'manage', describe and understand her reading identity through a rhetoric of skill that resonates both with Zukas and Malcolm's (1999) of the teacher as psycho-diagnostician and with her understandings of what reading is:

[What are you doing when you read?] Well you look at it and most of the time you're skim reading and picking out most important words.

Although Meena begins her account with the assertion that she enjoyed school and reading her assertion that:

I enjoy reading in my spare time when I'm all alone so I can concentrate more,

seems to couple reading with labour, endeavour and effort.

What is most interesting about Meena is that although she accepts without question that reading is a central and important activity of schooling and she offers, unlike some of the GCSE students above, no resistance to this she also expresses no account of her/self that binds her to particular reading or textual events.

Through her narrative Meena constructs a 'self' that can exist comfortably within the framing of the preferred identities of the elaborated code. This would suggest that she recognises that to do so is profitable in some way. Furthermore she also seems positively inclined towards realising these identities and does take time to represent herself and her family, particularly her sister, as people who 'enjoy' reading. Although she does not detail preferred authors and texts she is keen to suggest that she and her sister have in the past or continue to read often and regularly. Representing 'herself' as a willing reader would appear to be important to Meena.

What is particularly interesting about Meena's account is the lack of detail. Meena reveals little about her life outside college or the meanings that reading has in her out of college life. This may of course be because she views her life-world literacies through the lens of schooled-literacies, which can clearly have the effect of rendering the former invisible (Street, 1999). But it might equally be the case that Meena chooses to give what she perceives to be the most profitable performance of self, that is to say a version of self that is compliant with the kinds of identities that are preferred within the institutional validated context, because she brackets educational research and researchers as addressees operating within the same framing as college

practices. Meena perhaps reads that this domain, or specialist field is best navigated in this way but that this is not necessarily an identity that she sees as relevant to or desirable for her out-of-college life.

Sarah

Sarah is 18 and describes herself as white British. Her mother is a housewife and also a school governor and her father is unemployed due to disability. I found Sarah's addition of 'school governor' to her mother's role as housewife to be interesting, as this inclusion would suggest a keenness to align her mother (and perhaps by association therefore also herself) to the school (as institution) and its practices.

Sarah's introduction is qualitatively different to Meena's:

I'm a student at [name of college] centre and I'm currently studying A level history and English Literature and I'm also 1 year A level communications. I went straight into college from school and I did enjoy school and I did very well in my GCSEs particularly I enjoyed English and Drama and performed in annual school plays I was very enthusiastic at school and was involved in school life for example I was captain of the netball team and also I took part in the student council. I suppose my success as a pupil led to me being elected as Head Girl. I believe the teachers at my school influenced what I do at college now and particular teachers inspired me in to wanting to become a teacher myself. The whole school's closing down now and I suppose it saddens me as I've got loads and loads of happy memories of the place.

Sarah's narrative is characterised by her 'enthusiasm' and 'excitement' in terms of both content and delivery. She is exuberant about her memories of school and is keen to describe the many roles she undertook. Many of these roles, Head Girl in particular, would suggest the embracing of preferred identities and even perhaps a more specific desire to be 'on the inside' which culminates in her aspiration to become a teacher. Sarah expresses her 'expert' recognition of the elaborated code in a variety of ways. She organises

her reading by preferred author, Roald Dahl, and claims a universal appeal and relevance for this writer:

The books I read at school were mainly Roald Dahl books because I think he's an absolutely brilliant writer and I think all children should have to listen to Roald Dahl.

And she mobilises a discourse of enrichment to make sense of her tastes and preferences. This re-emerges on several occasions; where she signals her developing maturity and distinguishes her more grown-up friendships through the rite of gifting books:

I never used to buy books as gifts but now I do I mean even as recent as Christmas I bought my friend a book. I used to receive books as gifts when I was younger in particular erm, and then when I was at Sunday school I received a lot then for attendance;

And asserts that her contact with books correlates to a growth in her knowledge, understanding and insight:

I'd describe myself as a pretty fluent reader and I enjoy reading books with words I don't necessarily understand because I think that makes me more knowledgeable...I think reading it definitely improves your vocabulary and widens your knowledge

I think if I didn't read or I couldn't read I don't think I'd be as intelligent and I don't think I'd be as wise.

It is interesting that Sarah's comments about gifts are followed directly by an example of an occasion when she was given books to reward and reinforce approved behaviours. Although Sarah does not reflect on this coupling it would suggest that she makes a connection, conscious or unconscious, between books as legitimate and appropriate rewards for, and therefore perhaps symbolic of, the achievement of preferred identities. It is perhaps possible to interpret this further still and argue that books, novels in particular, have become symbolic of 'successful management' of self and identity within specific domains of practice for example church and school.

Sarah has a secure understanding of the organisational structures of the literacy curricula she has experienced and the different positions made available to readers with differing levels of competence and expertise:

My earliest memories of reading go back to early primary school about year 1 or year 2 and we had to read different colour books and the easiest ones were blue then they went to green and to red then to yellow and to orange. Orange was the most advanced and I remember reaching this at quite an early age. Erm (laughs) I can still remember all the characters. We had to read this book with our parents and then to our teachers.

Sarah's identity as a competent and 'high achieving' reader within these terms:

At the beginning of High School I won a reading competition and of course the feeling changed then I was I was overwhelmed to be classed as a really, really good reader.

means that she is not only positioned (passive) as learner but that she is also able to take up (active) a teacher-like position, a position which is self-defined as yielding additional status and kudos:

Once I'd finished all these I used to get asked to listen to other people read erm and I remember feeling quite an achievement after this cos I thought yeah I'll get to listen to other kids read I felt quite big [laughs].

Sarah notes a change in emphasis as she moves from primary to secondary school:

Reading at secondary school was definitely different from primary school. At secondary school we mainly read books to do with our subjects erm in English towards the end of secondary school we read Macbeth and Educating Rita which I really enjoyed erm a range of books really at secondary school whereas at primary school it was more for fun whereas at secondary school it was definitely subject based. Reading at secondary school I suppose I look back now and I think yeah I suppose it was a bit boring because we couldn't read for enjoyment you had to read to produce a piece of coursework.

Although she feels the secondary reading curriculum to be less stimulating she stops short of being critical and yields to the need to produce coursework. This effects to put the reading practices of the secondary school beyond criticism in the pedagogical sense. That is to say that although she feels subject based reading to be less enjoyable she does not contest its relevance or usefulness to the wider project of her education which she seems content to entrust enthusiastically to her teachers.

She draws on a discourse of distinction to talk about the reading practices of the home. She is keen to assert her Dad's thoroughness of approach to reading the newspaper and cites this as being central to the routine of his everyday:

I learnt to read at school but my parents did help at home. Occasionally I'd try and read the newspaper with my dad because my dad has a ritual where every morning he gets up and he reads the newspaper from cover to cover.

Sarah's own reading choices are heavily influenced by school experience:

The books that I enjoyed the most were definitely books by Roald Dahl and in particular *The Twits* I absolutely adored this book. After we'd read it at school I went out and I made my mum buy me *The Twits* I bought it on tape and I bought the book.

And she is keen to be able to recognise important books whether or not she has direct experience of them, her comments on the bible resonate with the earlier quote about the universal appeal of Roald Dahl. Here it would seem that it is the ability to recognise the legitimate, or in Bourdieu's (1992) terms 'consecrated', text that Sarah is eager to demonstrate:

Erm I suppose I always found that the bible was a fairly important book. I've never really read a lot of the bible I read children's stories but I suppose that's a really important book.

Sarah also positions books at the centre of a possible political affiliation or interest:

I like reading books that keep me interested at the moment I read a lot of feminist books, particularly *Union Street* by Pat Barker, that's one of my favourites that I'm also using for coursework.

Which brings her further into line with her teacher:

it [Pat Barker's *Union Street*] was recommended to me by a teacher. I read it and I thought wow, it absolutely shocked me the fact that someone had the guts to write down in detail how someone was raped and how women deal with domestic violence, how women deal with becoming a widow. Absolutely wonderful. I suppose in a way I ignore issues like that because they don't affect me but reading the book brought those sorts of things to life and I suppose I'm more aware of female experience.

This is interesting because it perhaps demonstrates the ways that Sarah uses her teachers as key reference points for constructing self. Her later, rather ardent, declaration that she dislikes politics:

My least favourite kind of reading is political. I don't like anything to do with war or anything to do with politics. I don't mind things to do with society but politics bores the hell out of me.

would seem to further support the idea that her curiosity about feminism emanates from a desire that is not politically motivated.

Projecting herself as an enthusiastic reader, and being defined by others as a reader, is for Sarah an important measure of her educational success. Equally it is a way of forging alliances with friends and teachers and a means of expressing her acceptance of and inclusion in a wider culture and society that might be defined as mainstream:

I tend to read things like the newspaper to keep me up to date with what's going on in the world and if I couldn't read I'd feel really excluded.

For Sarah taking up and participation in the 'powerful literacies' (Crowther et al, 2001) that help to organise, mediate and express institutional practices and relations would seem to be central to (although importantly not at the centre)

to Sarah's ethics (where ethics are defined, as discussed above, as the "sets of standards to do with being a particular sort of person" (Foucault, 2000:264). Thus Sarah manages her identity to meet these aspirations. To this end being the kind of reader framed as successful within the elaborated code, is necessarily entangled with a range of life-world activities most particularly expressed through the forming, nurturing and sustaining of friendships.

Sarah completes her narrative with a comment on what participating in the research process has meant for her:

I think taking part in this activity has given me chance to look at how much I do and don't read and what sort of things I do and don't read. It's brought to life that reading is something that I take for granted I suppose if I couldn't do it I'd wish that I could so this activity has definitely opened my eyes to the way I am.

This very naturalistic response, "the way I am", appeals to a modernist discourse about self that sees identity as a consequential expression of habitus colliding with field (Bourdieu, 1991). In fact Sarah's, and perhaps more so Meena's, 'expert' performance of self would seem to be antithetical to this.

Whilst this kind of structuralist paradigm would seem to offer a useful grammar for exploring the ways in which the members of different social groups might be positioned by the discourses at play within the specialist fields or domain it would seem to offer an insufficient account of the agency subjects exercise in the shaping and forming of self/ves as they 'address', and perform to different audiences, Bakhtin's notion of addressivity (see Lillis, 2001: 74-75) might be borrowed as a metaphor for this. What we experience through Sarah's narrative then is perhaps less the absolute "what I am" (this may or may not be what Sarah *feels herself to be*) than both the articulation of a preferred positioning and, simultaneously, a contribution to the work of insulation (Bernstein, 2000); a labouring for 'protection' (for me as well as Sarah) from the "unthinkable" (ibid. 7) 'other' (Atkinson, 2004), or Bernstein's 'fissures' and 'cleavages' (2000: 15), that threaten the classificatory ordering through which both her preferred position is defined and her entitlement to take it up is established.

Thomas²⁰

I have chosen to finish this section with an exploration of Thomas' narrative. Thomas is 35 and white and married with two young daughters. Thomas' family are local to the Black Country, his father is a security guard and his mother a housewife. Thomas joined the college staff as a library assistant, then became an ICT technician and is now employed in a multi-faceted role that includes Learning Centre Supervisor, Key Skills Tutor and ICT Champion, he has also studied towards a City and Guilds teacher training qualification.

Before joining the college staff he'd had a varied employment history:

I left school at 16 and went to work for the MEB, had various jobs in between then and drifted into this job nine years ago. Jobs I had after I'd left the MEB included digging holes in the road being a barman, being a porter, being a security guard electrician, cement mixer, labourer, plasterer's mate various other jobs. Ran a market stall for a short while as well.

His transcript is significantly longer than either Meena's or Sarah's and his story is extremely detailed and carefully recounted. However there are times during his account when alterations in his tone of voice, pace and fluency indicate that he is feeling quite emotional, on one occasion he loses his composure and stops the tape, when he begins again he sounds calmer but still a little sad:

What I my earliest memories of reading? Erm Peter and Jane, you know 1a and 1b books "Spot sees the ball" " Spot chases the ball". Er I remember reading lessons at primary school vaguely erm also reading the Peter and Jane books at home. Also due to reasons I was sent home extra books to read cos I wasn't very good at reading at that point erm these were basically children's books when I was about seven and these were four year olds' books so that didn't help much. Er what did I associate with reading as a young child? I found it very very very [*stressing words carefully*] difficult I hated it basically. I had to read passages out of books stumbled, stuttered etc [*Thomas stops the tape here*]....[resumes recording] Erm my earliest memories of

²⁰ An extract from the transcript of Thomas's narrative appears below starting at page 240.

learning to read as I said Peter and Jane books and I remember my older brother helping me to read at home a fair bit. Sitting there trying to read the books in the front room everybody else watching the telly. As I said the books I were reading were Peter and Jane my favourite book at that time was Harry the Dirty Dog by some French author erm I read it to my daughter now so she likes it as well.

This quite painful recollection typifies the story Thomas tells of his childhood reading experiences and particularly his recollections of reading at school. His account is littered with words and phrases like “difficult”, “difficult, hard”, “I stumbled through it” becoming more extreme as he begins to talk about secondary school at which point his memories provoke an extreme response, “I loathed, I hated it [reading] with a passion...I hated it, loathed it, detested it.” He goes on to describe how these feelings culminated in his “avoid[ing] reading for a long time.”

In many ways these feeling seem to be associated with the disapproval he experienced as a ‘weak’ reader “I remember having to read to the teacher and getting that stern look off her every week” and his inability to fathom why it was he was unable to read when those around him, peers at school, brothers, parents, were not experiencing the same difficulties with reading “I found it not an enjoyable experience, couldn’t understand why I couldn’t [read]. Everyone in the family enjoyed reading there was a big bookcase nobody really didn’t like reading apart from myself.”

Unlike Sarah’s story, Thomas’ is one of being situated as an underachieving reader, of being positioned as ‘other’ to the preferred identities of the elaborated codes of educational institutions and the external social and cultural values (perhaps represented through the dominant and valued practices of his family) by which these codes are framed and classified.

To make sense of this positioning Thomas draws on the ‘diagnosis’, at thirteen or fourteen, that he is dyslexic. Thomas takes this as an explanation of his difficult experience and his descriptions of reading seem to alter dramatically after the mention of this diagnosis in the same way he suggests his experiences changed for the better:

Do you consider yourself a good reader? No I'm not a good reader, going back to question 6 erm secondary school was improved when I was 13 or 14 by my Chemistry teacher discovering I was dyslexic erm this put me into remedial education as it was then called now called learning support. That helped an awful lot, that did improve my reading style a lot erm I was pushed on to reading what I would say at 14 male, a 14 year old male finds interesting, books like Stephen King er James Herbert you know the normal horror thing for a 14 year old boy.

He then goes on to describe the wide range of reading practices he engages in as an adult from which he seem to gain both personal and professional value:

I read quite a lot nowadays erm I enjoy reading I read Terry Pratchett, Iain Banks erm technical manuals due to my job. What else do I read? Newspapers I read the Sunday Times, the Times erm I read New Scientist, Scientific American erm I read a computer magazine occasionally I read music magazines er.

Thomas is happy to offer his thoughts and reflections on his favourite authors and shares a humorous inter-textual reference about Tolkein and Pratchett that suggests an engagement with wider popular literary debate:

My preferred reading is Terry Pratchett as I said cos I find the irony of the books interesting, the comments within the books interesting and anything which takes the mickey out of Tolkein I'm quite happy with.

He also identifies a range of texts, including multi-modal texts like songs, that he feels have impacted on his personal development and political understandings:

[the] communist manifesto when I was about 19 changed my way of thinking a lot. Things which changed my life mostly was listening to lyrics of songs erm I don't think anything's actually changed the way I think, it might have altered it slightly but nothing in a radical manner. I read the communist party manifesto when I was on the dole back in 1986 or 7 erm so the middle of the recession a lot of trouble going on erm err later in life reading er the works of Leyburn erm leader in the civil war, reading the history of his life story, the Ragged Trousered

Philanthropist erm what else? Bits of Moby Dick never actually finished reading it but I can read it bits at a time.

And a range of practices related to reading print-based texts that mediate his emotional and family life:

At home I read to the children er I read books, papers, magazines as I said.

[I] talk to my brothers about what we've read talk to my wife about what we've read, have arguments [corrects in a joking manner] discussions and arguments over what this means and what that means. My free-time reading is, as I say, mainly made up of newspapers.

Thomas also prefers to engage with news through print-based text rather than television, and he makes distinctions between different newspapers that suggest that it is important to him to read critically:

How would your life be different if you couldn't or chose not to read? I'd know less it's the major way I get my information erm I don't watch the telly that much I have a tendency to read er two different newspapers to give me myself different aspects to get the news I get the Times or the Independent I refuse to read the Guardian, so I'd understand less and know less and think less. The old saying is the more you know the less you understand er it would make me question less.

However despite his actual 'success' as a reader, measured here in terms of participation in and enjoyment of a wider range of social and professional activities and relationships Thomas' identity as a reader remains problematic for him and he continues to understand himself through the kinds of deficit models of what it means to be a reader that characterise educational contexts:

As I say going back to the good reader erm I find reading, I still find reading difficult, I can't skim I can't scan I have to read every word

And when he goes on to describe what happens when he reads he seems to draw heavily on what Herrington (2004) calls a medical model of dyslexia (this tessellates almost directly on to the kinds of technician understandings of

literacy outlined above and below), this heavily influences Thomas's understandings of his own progress and his preoccupation with not getting things right and not getting things wrong:

Number ten...think about reading what actually happens? As I said due to my dyslexia I do have (stress) to read all the words I can't skim erm I have to sit there I'll have to read the paragraph twice sometimes I'll have to read the same sentence two or three times the same line of text. I get annoyed. If I read something I find interesting erm I'll read a paragraph think about that paragraph read the next paragraph, next two paragraphs, read a paragraph think about that paragraph, read the next paragraph next two paragraphs whatever think about it. Erm if there's, if I've read something earlier that cross-link in I've gotta go back and read that if I've been reading one paper I go and get the other paper, if there's something I remember from the internet I go and check back on the internet just to make sure I remembered it correctly. Erm when words appear on the screen I have to concentrate erm the words move, sentences don't make sense cos I'll change where to were errr tie into ite that sort of thing erm that's about it.

This seems to be confirmed through Thomas' response to the final prompt question:

How do I feel about this activity? It hasn't bothered me in the slightest erm it's been interesting making me think about my reading habits and what else I've done, no problems.

I feel almost that Thomas is reassuring me here that he wants to let me know that he has coped with the activity and that it hasn't caused him difficulty or distress. What is striking about this is that he brings the same feelings, understandings and identities he has described throughout the activity to bear on his reflections of taking part in the activity. So he falls back on the rhetoric of 'ability' and 'coping' that characterise his situatedness to reading at different points in his narrative.

Act 6

Teachers, learners, literacy,

pedagogy: 'literacy' as

contested site

Situating teachers and learners within stories about reading and writing

In education reading and writing practices shape the learning encounter. The ways in which policy makers, at a macro level, and teachers, at local level, choose to 'know about', articulate, produce, reproduce and represent reading and writing inevitably and necessarily construes a micro-politics of educational practice that fuels a wider politics of educational purpose. The manner in which these processes are transacted asserts a set of social relations that construct the learner and the teacher as different kinds of agents involved in dissimilar activities; that is to say they are differently situated to classroom literacies and thereby are differently licensed to take up positions that enable them to exercise power in the classroom space. The ways in which a teacher chooses to 'know' literacy through their pedagogic practice have important implications/ramifications not only for the kind of educational experiences students are offered, but also for issues of equality and social justice.

Here I draw on the reflections about reading and writing drawn out above to consider how the tales we choose to tell ourselves and our learners about reading and writing may differently construe the educational contract and the roles and identities of the 'teachers', 'learners' and 'curricula' that enact it.

Narrative one – 'The literacy ladder' (Crowther et al, 2001)

In this story literacy is configured as a de-contextualised 'tool-kit', an autonomous (Street, 1995) set of skills, in reading, writing, speaking and listening, that once acquired enable the holder to effectively 'function' across a range of contexts. Literacy is achieved through a linear process of 'becoming' as the learner moves up the ladder, mono-directionally,

Chorus: Thomas,²¹

I work at [a Black Country college] my role is learning centre supervisor, key skills tutor ICT champion.

I left school at 16 and went to work for the MEB, had various jobs in between then and drifted into this job nine years ago. Jobs I had after I'd left the MEB included digging holes in the road being a barman, being a porter, being a security guard electrician, cement mixer, labourer, plasterer's mate various other jobs. Ran a market stall for a short while as well.

What I my earliest memories of reading? Erm Peter and Jane, you know 1a and 1b books "Spot sees the ball" "Spot chases the ball". Er I remember reading lessons at primary school vaguely erm also reading the Peter and Jane books at home. Also due to reasons I was sent home extra books to read cos I wasn't very good at reading at that point erm these were basically children's books when I was about 7 and these were 4 year olds' books so that didn't help much. Er what did I associate with reading as a

from an 'illiterate' identity (illiteracy) toward the promise of 'literacy'. Central to this idea is that the version of literacy enshrined within this promise is both holistic in breadth and universally useful, as such it can be represented through nationally agreed specifications such as those examined above.

Learners

In England, at the moment of writing, this transitional journey is symbolised as essentially a cathartic one, with inhabitants at the lower rungs characterised as 'stumped', 'anxious', 'panicky' (LSC Black Country, 2004), continually on the cusp of exposure. The Black Country LSC 'Move On' campaign (2004), directed at a 16 plus audience asks:

Do you start to panic when someone asks you to fill in a form?
Do you always try to make out you're busy when the kids come home from school, so you don't have to help them with their homework?
Do you pretend you've forgotten your glasses when someone asks you to read something?

These questions construct a number of insecurities for the 'yes' respondent about their capacity to participate in and contribute to the everyday demands of

²¹ This is the transcript of Thomas's autoethnographic narrative that is explored above.

young child? I found it very very very (stressing words) difficult I hated it basically. I had to read passages out of books stumbled, stuttered etc. STOPS THE TAPE HERE.

Erm my earliest memories of learning to read as I said Peter and Jane books and I remember my older brother helping me to read at home a fair bit. Sitting there trying to read the books in the front room everybody else watching the telly. As I said the books I were reading were Peter and Jane my favourite book at that time was Harry the Dirty Dog by some french author erm I read it to my daughter now so she likes it as well.

Erm what do you remember about the books you read at school? Not a great deal as I say I tried to avoid reading for a long time, didn't really read from the school library or take any of the books out. Mr Men books I suppose at one point.

Er what do you remember about reading as an adult at home or at school? Erm I remember having to read to the teacher and getting that stern look off her every week said I remember reading with my brother and reading with my father occasionally

Feelings I associate with learning to read? As I said earlier it was difficult, I found it difficult hard not an enjoyable experience, couldn't understand why I couldn't

Can you describe the reading habits of

both private and public life, thus establishing a potential motivator for learning and skills acquisition. The would be learner is invited into a contract that promises a transformative future that will “open[ing] up a whole new world of opportunity...not only will learning new skills and picking up new qualifications help you to get a job, it can help you to feel more confident” (ibid.).

It is a common sense of the literacy ladder ideologue, as it is played out through English policy, that the ‘illiterate’ identity is ‘in deficit’ and that the subject will seek to manage this ‘lack’ through strategies that seek to conceal and mask. This inevitability is expressed through the metaphor of the gremlin, a central character in the current DFES media campaign to bring adults into literacy education who ‘haunts’ the everyday of the less literate, becoming literate is represented through the gremlins campaign as a process of exorcism, of shedding insecurities. By implication, the learner and the degree of their commitment and motivation is the central impetus for successful acquisition of literacy.

Teachers and learners

other people in your childhood? My brothers both read a lot er my middle brother read Enid Blyton voraciously for about 3 or 4 years I remember reading him reading it when we went to visit my gran. Er my other brother I don't know what he read, he's five years older than me and when you're six or seven that's a lot. Erm who enjoyed reading? Everyone in the family enjoyed reading there was a big bookcase nobody really didn't like reading apart from myself. Erm what did they read? My dad read the Express and Star every night so we had the newspaper books er both my brothers read as I've said Enid Blyton, adventure stories er Nancy Drew mysteries sort of thing. My father read a lot of military history waterloo, live story of Wellington, technical things not really, sport we all read the rugby world because we're all big rugby players. Magazines, fanzines going a bit later in life the NME, Sounds, Melody Maker. Comics, my brother read Roy of the Rovers I read the Whopee, religious books not in our household (sounds amused) I don't think we had a copy of the bible in our house until we were I was about 20. No I never bought books, I don't think I can ever remember giving books. Did I receive books? Erm Yes I received off both my grandmothers one would always get

In this tale about literacy the teacher must have already demonstrated their position at the 'top of the ladder' and represents the other to the learner. Within the current English context the literate identities of teachers are shaped, exposed and endorsed through teacher training requirements, approved specialist subject qualifications for teachers of adult literacy at a minimum of national qualifications framework (NQF) level 4 (from 2003) and new requirements to evidence 'personal skill' at an equivalent level at the initial teacher education stage (to be mapped 2004, assessed 2005). Both requirements are regulated by the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO)²²

In this story the 'literate' teacher must guide the 'less literate' student towards the goal of 'literacy' – the top of the ladder. Zukas and Malcolm define the teacher in this story as the 'psycho-diagnostician and facilitator of learning':

The educator as psycho-diagnostician and facilitator of learning...the role of the teacher is firstly to diagnose the learners' needs, for example by identifying or taking into account learning styles or skills, or other individual predispositions, according to a favoured learning theory. Secondly,

²² At the time of binding the roles and responsibilities of FENTO as statutory regulator are being transferred to the sector learning and skills council Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK).

me fairly tale books and my paternal grandmother always got me factual books, books about animals, dinosaurs or little encyclopaedia's. As I said there was a 12 and a half long bookcase across the front window there were books in the bedrooms books under the beds magazines were normally kept on the floor. As I say my brother collected the NME and later in life I collected Vox erm and the NME I presume. Any books we thought were particularly important? Not really I don't understand what you mean by particularly important to me no, important technically yeah dictionaries obviously, encyclopaedia's that sort of thing erm. Some books you had to be careful with because they was old, the old Giles annuals from back from 1951.

Err what feelings do you associate with reading at home? Again I found it difficult and didn't overly enjoy it and I stumbled through it.

What do you remember about reading at secondary school? This I absolutely loathed, I hated it with a passion. Erm I hated having to do the spelling [unclear] I hated having to do spelling tests erm primary school you could get away with reading to the teacher, secondary school you had to read in front of the class again I hated this the

the teacher must facilitate their learning by using techniques, tools and approaches which meet those needs.' (Zukas and Malcolm 1999:3)²³

Within this narrative the learner is construed as an 'anonymous, decontextualised, degendered being whose principal distinguishing characteristics are 'personality' and 'learning style' (Malcolm and Zukas 1999a: 4; Malcolm and Zukas 1999b), the learners 'responsibility' is to acquire 'skills' which are atomised and ordered by hierarchical and linear arrangement whilst the teacher's job, as enshrined in the national standards for teachers in the post-compulsory sector, (FENTO: 2001), is to assess learners' needs, plan and prepare an appropriate teaching and learning programme with identified learning outcomes, determine a range of suitable teaching and learning techniques, manage the learning process, provide support to ensure the student meets the desired outcomes, assess the outcomes of learning. (FENTO: 2001)

Clearly here 'teacher' and 'learner' are understood to be entirely different entities exhibiting different qualities and identities. Street (see also Barton, 1990)

²³ It is noted by Zukas and Malcolm that this is a dominant model in UK HE literature. A fuller discussion/critique of the psychologisation of teaching and learning contained in Zukas and Malcolm (1999b)

teachers at the time didn't seem overly sympathetic and with hindsight they now seem totally cruel.

What feelings do you assoc. reading with sec school? As I said I hated it, loathed it, detested it. The only book I can remember reading at secondary school is 'I am David' with me class and that was about it. Secondary school if you mean what I call high school we read Harper Lee, this is moving on to when I was about 14. Erm I remember reading Harper Lee, nothing else sticks in my mind.

I read quite a lot nowadays erm I enjoy reading I read Terry Pratchett, Iain Banks erm technical manuals due to my job. What else do I read? Newspapers I read the Sunday Times, the Times erm I read New Scientist, Scientific American erm I read a computer magazine occasionally I read music magazines err.

Do you consider yourself a good reader? No I'm not a good reader, going back to question 6 erm secondary school was improved when I was 13 or 14 by my Chemistry teacher discovering I was dyslexic erm this put me into remedial education as it was then called now called learning support. That helped an awful lot, that did improve my reading style a lot erm I was pushed on to reading what I would say at 14 male, a 14 year old male finds interesting, books like Stephen King err James Herbert you

has called this the 'great divide theory':

...illiterates are fundamentally different from literates. For individuals this is taken to mean that ways of thinking, cognitive abilities, facility in logic, abstraction and higher mental operations are all related to the achievement of literacy: the corollary is that literates are presumed to lack all these qualities, to be able to think less abstractly, to be more embedded, less critical, less able to reflect upon the nature of the language they use or the sources of their political oppression. (Street, 1995: 21)

Learners are seen as in deficit, as needing 'help' (Pember, 2001) and in short are identified as having problems that professionals have a responsibility to solve; thus effecting a professional 'contract' of 'care' (Avis et al, 2002).

Knowledge and curriculum

At the outset of their learning experience the learner's literacy capabilities are screened, diagnosed and tested to enable the effective design of their route through the curriculum.

Within this set of constructions reading and writing are implicit to the range of 'skill' that it is desirable for students to acquire – as 'skills' that are integral to classroom activities and assessment

know the normal horror thing for a 14 year old boy. As I say going back to the good reader erm I find reading, I still find reading difficult, I can't skim I can't scan I have to read every word. How important is reading to happiness and well being? I enjoy reading a good book erm if I can relax with a book for a couple of hours I'm quite happy, it's not if I don't it's not a case of if I don't read for two weeks I'm gonna get the jitters or anything it's not something that majorly important.

My preferred reading is Terry Pratchett as I said cos I find the irony of the books interesting, the comments within the books interesting and anything which takes the mickey out of Tolkein I'm quite happy with. What's my favourite kind of reading? Technical manuals for computer programmes cos they're written in such a manner that if you can understand what they say you don't need to read them. Erm have you ever read anything that's had an impact on your life? Difficult one, communist manifesto when I was about 19 changed my way of thinking a lot. Things which changed my life mostly was listening to lyrics of songs erm I don't think anything's actually changed the way I think, it might have altered it slightly but nothing in a radical manner. I read the communist party manifesto when I was on the dole back in 1986 or 7 erm so the middle of

processes. Indeed this is explicitly articulated through the language and organisation of the 'skills curricula', Key skills levels 1-4 (QCA, 2000) and the National Curriculum for Adult Literacy (2001), that now map into and across the full range of Learning and Skills council funded post-compulsory provision. Each of these curricula narrativises literacy as a set of 'competencies', whereby a student will climb a 'literacy ladder' (Crowther, Hamilton and Tett 2001:2) towards and in pursuit of an ideal of attaining mastery of a preferred, standardised, appropriate set of literacy forms, the higher status and value of which are accepted as uncontroversial givens. Within the academic disciplines, literacy – perhaps practised, honed and perfected elsewhere – becomes the 'means' by which the individual 'accesses' the content of the curriculum, of functional, instrumental value because 'it' enables students to 'perform' successfully. The content of the curriculum, by extension is 'out there' and it is the students' job to 'use' their literacy skills to seek, find and acquire a set of pre-existing meanings and values. Literacy is tangible, known and knowable, fixed, determined. Reading is for enlightenment, to consume increased amounts of the known quantity, and the reader will, as their skills develop, move

the recession a lot of trouble going on erm err later in life reading er the works of [unclear in recording] Leyburn erm leader of the [unclear in recording] civil war, reading the history of his life story, the Ragged Trousered Philanthropist erm what else? Bits of Moby Dick never actually finished reading it but I can read it bits at a time. I tried reading the proper books as I said Tolstoy, can't get on with them.

What role does reading have in different aspects of your life at college home etc? Er have to report obviously, have to write technical manuals have to read those back to myself erm so that's more formal. At home I read to the children err I read books, papers, magazines as I said.

Erm friendships, exchange books between friends rarely, because it's always the same thing you lend em and they never come back. Home and family relationships, talk to my brothers about what we've read talk to my wife about what we've read, have arguments (corrects) discussions and arguments over what this means and what that means. My free time reading is, as I say, mainly made up of newspapers.

How would your life be different if you couldn't or chose not to read? I'd know less it's the major way I get my information erm I don't watch the telly that much I have a tendency to read

from "following narrative...recognising words..." (Reading comprehension at Entry Level, Basic Skills Agency, 2001:14) through to 'Trace and understand.... recognise and understand...organisational features...Identify the main points...obtain specific information" (ibid. page 15) at Entry Level 3 to "read critically to evaluate information...use different reading strategies to find and obtain information...read an argument and identify the points of view" (ibid. page 15).

Here the relationship between reader and text is represented as uncomplicated and straightforward: the reader will use their knowledge of the 'individual words themselves, their structure, spelling and individual character' (ibid. page 7) in combination with their knowledge and understanding of grammar and sentence structure to access 'the overall meaning of the text' (ibid. page 7). An acceptance of the authority of text is central to this model of reading with the reader a decoder of meaning. The student is offered a stake in what is known but not in how it is known, who it is known by, whether it is worth knowing, or that there might be alternative ways of knowing. The student as a reader is positioned as a

err two different newspapers to give me myself different aspects to get the news I get the Times or the Independent I refuse to read the Guardian, so I'd understand less and know less and think less. The old saying is the more you know the less you understand err it would make me question less.

Number 10 [reads from prompt sheet] think about reading what actually happens? As I said due to my dyslexia I do have (stress) to read all the words I can't skim erm I have to sit there I'll have to read the paragraph twice sometimes I'll have to read the same sentence two or three times the same line of text. I get annoyed. If I read something I find interesting erm I'll read a paragraph think about that paragraph read the next paragraph, next two paragraphs, read a paragraph think about that paragraph, read the next paragraph next two paragraphs whatever think about it. Erm if there's, if I've read something earlier that cross-link in I've gotta go back and read that if I've been reading one paper I go and get the other paper, if there's something I remember from the internet I go and check back on the internet just to make sure I remembered it correctly. Erm when words appear on the screen I have to concentrate erm the words move, sentences don't make sense cos

consumer of pre-given texts in what is explored above as an essentially structuralist model of making and taking meaning.

Many exponents of this variety of literacy link its successful acquisition to enhanced productivity and envisage benefits both for the economy and for individual workers. "Businesses in the new hyper-competitive global capitalism" argues Gee (2000: 46) in his critique of the New Capitalism "march to the drumbeat of distributed systems...there is no centre. There are no individuals. Only ensembles of skills stored in a person, assembled for a specific project, to be reassembled for other projects, and shared"(ibid). Thus improving the literacy 'levels' of the worker comes to be seen as an essential aspect of economic advancement and prosperity and literacy as 'commodity' becomes central to a political agenda that links literacy with economic productivity (Sanguinetti 2001 and Gee 2000). Certainly the UK government is keen to assert a perceived correlation between an individual's literacy level and the kinds of income they might expect to command (Pember, 2001)²⁴. Thus literacy and economic 'enlightenment' seem cast in a

²⁴ As head of Basic Skills Unit at DfES Susan Pember outlined that an individual might expect their salary to increase as their basic skills improved – in particular she suggested that an increase of £50,000 over 20 years was a realistic expectation for those improving their numeracy skills.

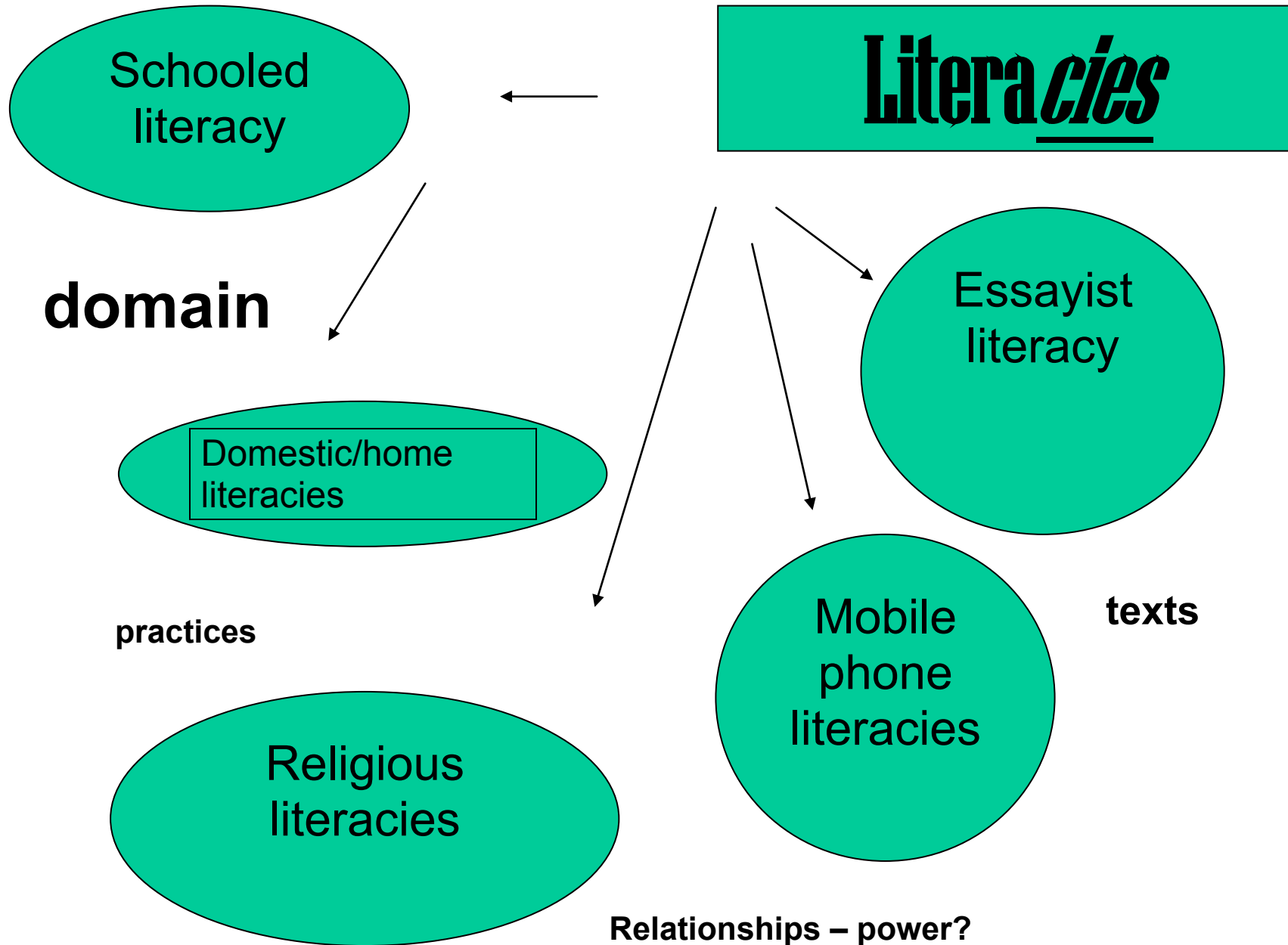
I'll change where to were errr tie into it that sort of thing erm that's about it. How do I feel about this activity? It hasn't bothered me in the slightest erm it's been interesting making me think about my reading habits and what else I've done, no problems.

sympiotic relationship, a straightforward logic within which one's skills portfolio – of which literacy skills are an important aspect - is directly and unproblematically linked to earning capacity. Within this set of understandings the student is cast as the central protagonist in their own drama of social and economic success, an 'action-hero' like figure whose success or failure with phonemes, connectives, capitalisation, tense and paragraphing at each rung of the literacy ladder determines their battery of weaponry. Literacy acquisition becomes a game in which the student is subject to but never configuring the rules of engagement. Fundamentally this is top-down model of literacy education that is driven by a notion of 'apparent' need (Castleton, 2001).

Narrative two: from literacy to literacies

An alternative story about literacy informed by readings from the New Literacy Studies (see above) tells different tales about teachers, learners and curriculum and emanates from the kinds of understandings about literacies expressed through Barton and Hamilton's five-point definition explored above.

For me what is central to these ideas is the multiple positions that it might be possible for subjects to take up within the wider field of (multiple) literacies. That is to say that Barton and Hamilton's definition allows for a blurring of the traditional, straightforward distinctions between subjects taking up different roles, i.e. learners and teachers, because it enables us to see subjects as having 'literacy portfolios' that develop and emerge through their participation in different 'domains' and communities of practice. Taking this paradigm to the educational context has significant implications for understandings of 'teacher' 'learner' and 'curriculum/knowledge'.



Bernstein's notion of the elaborated code is again helpful here. A central contention of literacies is the dispersal of expertise across different domains of practice. This suggests a horizontal discourse (Bernstein, 2000) about literacy that is weakly framed and classified. As such the locality of 'expertise' and the exercising of power are less predictable and *both* teachers *and* learners may take up positions that are legitimately powerful or less powerful, expert or inexperienced in relation to different domains and practices.

Learners may bring their own definitions about literacy to the classroom space that reflect their participation in 'non-schooled' (I borrow Street's term here to mean educational institutions more generally) and are likely 'literate' in specialist domains outside the classroom. Learners are recognised and acknowledged as experiencing functioning adult lives that involve participation in a variety of communities of practice that in turn mediate literacies and texts.

Teachers similarly are sometimes expert and sometimes not. Teachers will not, cannot and neither is it desirable that they should seek to, 'know' all that it is possible to know about the broader field of multiple literacies. Thus teachers must be researchers and learners within this field and acknowledge firstly the literacy profiles of learners and secondly the possibility that learners may be expert in their life-world domains.

Teachers within this story are challenged to read themselves "against the grain" (Street, 1997) and to acknowledge their own expertise *and* inexperience.

Zukas and Malcolm's 'critical practitioner model' offers something like the teacher imagined here and it is a model that contrasts antithetically with the practitioner as psycho-diagnostician:

The educator as critical practitioner...adds a critical, social, political or ideological dimension on the process of reflection. In this sense it takes the

process beyond the psychological and interpersonal, locating the practitioner in a social and, to varying degrees, political context. (1999:2)²⁵

Indeed the two models can be seen as the two ends of a continuum of 'ways of knowing' (Malcolm and Zukas 1999b: 2) about educational processes/practices and thereby, of what it means to be literate. Zukas and Malcolm (1999:2) argue that the educator as Critical practitioner 'takes the process [of teaching and learning] beyond the psychological and interpersonal, locating the practitioner in a social...and political context'. Within such a model curriculum might be conceived as a 'battleground for competing ideologies' (Kelly 2000:19) rather than as given and the student invited to explore their disciplinary space as a diaspora of ideas about what knowledge should and might be:

Curriculum – literally the course to be run – is not a given. There is no absolute, universally agreed curriculum. It is always a selection from a culture, a culture which is itself framed socio-historically. The curriculum – or should we say, a curriculum – is therefore always set within its socio-historical context. It is contingent upon, not 'above', that context. (Hartley, 1999:43)

Meaning/s become "cultural and learned, but...also unfixed, sliding and plural...in consequence a matter for political debate...[whereby] culture itself is the limit of our knowledge: there is no available truth outside culture." (Belsey and Moore 1989:10) and in which "the literal description of events is not possible, any more than description can exist in a one-to-one referential relationship to that which it purports to describe. Rather a description is a 'gloss', a typification of the presumed meaning of such events.' (Stanley 1993:214). Reading in this pedagogical turn becomes a very different set of practice/s to that found in the facilitator of learning model with notions of text, reader, language being deconstructed: 'texts don't stand on their own as bearers of their own self-defining meanings. Any text is always read from a particular point of view, by a subject (or subjects) positioned at a particular point...the 'true' text – is never

²⁵ It is noted by Zukas and Malcolm that 'adult education-orientated contributions have been influential' (1999:2) in shaping this particular discursive position.

more than an abstraction, an idea distinct from particularly positioned readings of aspects of the textual object.' (Peim, 1993:73). Acts of reading are re-conceived as a practice/s embedded in context as Barton and Hamilton (1998:7) summarise:

- 1.Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- 2.There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- 3.Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible, influential than others.
- 4.Literacy is historically situated
- 5.Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

Barton and Hamilton (1998:7)

Reading and writing practices are conceived as context bound, the 'listener/reader, speaker/writer, seen not as an isolated individual, but as a social agent, located in a network of social relations, in specific places in a social structure.' (Kress: 1990:5) An educational practice founded on/within such notions teachers and learners is no longer bound to discourses of 'appropriacy' but re-situated/liberated to 'scrutinise doctrines of and attitudes towards sociolinguistic practice...judgements on the basis of appropriateness can be assessed in light of their own sociolinguistic experience, including experience of inequalities between language varieties and constraints upon some of them.' (Fairclough,1992:53) This way of knowing and thinking about literacy aligns with Bahktin's (1981) notions of language as dialogic, that is to say language is not 'imposed' with users always struggling to extend its boundaries (centrifugal) as well as working within its prescribed limits (centripetal).

The Critical practitioner 'model' necessarily implies a critique of the facilitator of learning model, as notions of authority in textual and linguistic practice are problematised within the former paradigm:

if language is always contested, negotiated and employed in social interaction then the appropriateness of particular uses and interpretations have likewise to be opened to debate. It becomes impossible to lay down strict and formal rules for all time, and the authority of particular users – whether teachers, grammarians or politicians – become problematised. We all, as it were, take possession of language again rather than being passive victims of its entailments. (Street, 2001:19)

My PhD as an expression of my critical practice...or why it matters to 'me', as a teacher and teacher educator, how I write (practice) this thesis

It is useful to begin this part of the discussion with the words of a student writer:

I simply did not know how to claim my experience as academically valid. Instead, I stuck to the advice I had received from the first essay, concentrating on the structure of the essay, drawing on as many sources as possible, and including lots of references.

When I re-read that essay I had to be sorry for the unknown person who marked it. Instead of using my own experience and discussing my idea that understanding the gift gave insight not only into how communities worked but also how they could be helped to work better, I had produced a dull, boring literature review. In addition, in an attempt to sound 'academic' I had managed to write as if I am not there at all. (Aitchison 1996: 3)

Aitchison reports feelings of alienation from, and dissatisfaction with, both the writing she has produced and the 'advice' she has received about how to represent her voice for an academic audience. She feels a tension between wanting to recognise herself in the writing to 'be there' and speaking through the appropriate structures and conventions as a 'valid' 'academic'. It is interesting that although she feels uncommitted to the latter she subordinates to it her 'life world' repertoire, expressing thereby an implicit awareness that, in Foucault's words, "we know quite well that we do not have the right to say everything, that we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances whatsoever and that not everyone has the right to speak of whatever" (1984:109).

What is interesting here is that knowing what to say and how, realisation and recognition, is seen to be learned through participation in the elaborated code and means for Aitchison accepting ways of expressing herself that are externally imposed and non-negotiable. What her words reveal is that she feels herself to be subject to rather than a shaper of linguistic practice within the academic space. This grappling with the seemingly alien style, rules and structures of acceptable academic writing is one I see played out often among my own

students and it is a struggle very much framed by notions of perceived appropriacy, which are legitimated and reified by tutors, module guides²⁶, study support 'tip-sheets', and the hegemony of form, structure and style they encounter in their academic reading.

Central to what is at stake is a definition of literacy and the way/s institutions think, 'talk about' and represent 'literacy' to students. At the University I work at academic literacy is 'known' through a discourse of 'appropriacy', encapsulated in the 'tip-sheet', and legitimated through an 'autonomous' (Street 1997 and 2001) or performative account of literacy in which the political dynamics implicit in the construction and maintenance of genre are obscured by an appeal to the common sense of choosing the 'appropriate' writing in a given situation, essentially this is a skills based understanding of literacy. Kress' understanding of genre is helpful here as it recasts writing academically as a social practice:

genres have specific forms and meanings, deriving from and encoding the functions, purposes and meanings of the social occasions. Genres therefore provide a precise index and catalogue of the relevant social occasions of a community at a given time (Kress, 1990:19)

For Kress genre, predominantly in HE 'essayist literacy' (Lillis 2001), has its origins in the social and by implication therefore the historical and the political. Thus the rules of 'appropriate' writing are seen to be socially and politically charged. Fairclough points to the potential dangers therein:

appropriateness models in sociolinguistics or in educational policy documents should...be seen as ideologies, by which I mean that they are projecting, imaginary representations of sociolinguistic reality which correspond to the perspective and partisan interests of one section of

²⁶ At my own university, and more specifically the academic school I work within, module guides are seen as central to the 'learning contract' a student implicitly enters into with the university. Guides offer detailed and specific commentaries on expected learning outcomes, recommended reading, assignment writing, assessment deadlines and criteria as well as generic university wide regulations around equity, retrieving

society or one section of a particular social institution. (Fairclough, 1992:48).

Street argues that this serves to keep education 'safe', and "undermines its own claims to either equality or access in that it denies students the 'power' to question rules and procedures and to develop their own senses of language and literacy" (Street 2001:21). Students become imitators of the rules and learn their place in the 'pecking order' through their relationship with rule-making practices. If we return to Aitchison's words we see that what seems to be missing for her is a critical frame through which to explore in any meaningful or dynamic way the situatedness of her own literacies to the those of the university, and thus the confidence to develop more satisfying, perhaps experimental, approaches to practice that might better enable her to re-present a 'voice' over which she feels she has some kind of political 'ownership'.

Critical language and literacy education must then work with Bakhtinian (1981) notions of language as dialogic, fluid and in progress so as to enable to students to "act on and in the world" (LoBianco and Freebody, 1997:26). For Hamilton this means evolving literacy practices that are inevitably oppositional, practices which "open up, expose and counteract the institutional processes and professional mystique whereby dominant forms of literacy are placed beyond question." (Crowther et al 2001:3). Fairclough is more cautious and warns that:

critical language awareness should not push the learner into oppositional practices which condemn them to disadvantage and marginalisation; it should equip them with the capacities and understandings which are preconditions for meaningful choice and effective citizenship in the domain of language. (Fairclough, 1992 :54)

whilst Kress takes a more pragmatic stance arguing that students should be able to say

failure and academic misconduct, what module guides importantly *are not* is reflexive about the term of their construction.

here is a convention; this is its meaning; these are the structures and individuals that have produced it, and which support it; these are therefore the possibilities of change; and here are the linguistic/textual resources for achieving my aims (Kress 1994:54).

Despite arguments of degree there is consensus among these writers about the need to “facilitate for students and teachers alike the development of provisional models that help them to describe, observe and analyse different literacies rather than just learning and teaching one literacy as given.” (Street, 1997:54). For Gee this is a fundamental entitlement for learners from poor or minority backgrounds as their language repertoires are often more likely to be situated disadvantageously, within an economy of linguistic exchange (Bourdieu, 2002), to *the* powerful languages and literacies of educational institutions, Gee outlines a ‘bill of rights’ which includes the right to critical framing and the right to transform and produce knowledge (2001:67). Educational practices in these terms might facilitate a reflexivity about the genealogy of the market unification (Bourdieu, 2002) of linguistic standards and literacy practices prevalent within educational contexts and perhaps signified most clearly through the common sense of ‘essayist literacy’ (Lillis, 2001), prevalent within educational contexts. To ignore is to deny that curriculum can be “a way of asking questions about how ideas about knowledge and learning are linked to particular educational purposes and more broadly to ideas about society and the kind of citizens and parents we want our young people to become” (Young 2000:1) and to set instead an educational agenda which plays ‘safe’ and merely “undermines its own claims to either equality or access in that it denies students the authority to question the rules and procedures and to develop their own senses of language and literacy” (Street 2001:21), such agendas Kelly argues are counter-educational:

to be subjected to some form of indoctrinatory process through lack of the ability to analyse critically and identify the value positions implicit in the forms of curriculum we are offered or exposed to is, in the long term, inimical to educational development in a way that some lack of understanding of the technicalities of curriculum innovation or planning or

dissemination can never be. For, while the latter may diminish the quality of the educational experience offered the former must have the effect of rendering those experiences positively anti-educational. (2000:21)

The 'patchwork' approach to writing, of the kind that I'm trying to operationalise through this thesis seems to offer a valuable way of engaging in a dynamic, critical pedagogical practice through a process of writing oneself into and out of curriculum ideology/ies. It affords an opportunity not simply to learn the rules of dominant academic language games but to 'take possession of language' (Street, 2001:19) through *being taught* that there is a game to be played and that rather than simply playing out the power/language dynamics of the institution and its wider social and political context 'as passive victims of its entailments' (Street, 2001:19) they can choose to evolve practices that resist, re-shape and re-order, in effect that they too can become 'world-makers'.

This project, then, is conceived as an enactment of a critical pedagogic practice, both in terms of process [writing] and product [the making of text]. Thus it is an *act* of literacy, criticality and pedagogy as well as a 'case-study' about reading and readers. I am attempting to think not only about the shape and shaping of the situated literacy practices of higher education but at the same time to recognise the inter-textual nature of academic writing, and the ways in which 'authors' seek to gain legitimacy for their texts, it is to this end that I hope to offer something towards a new set of reference points by which students might 'birth' their own texts into/onto the world of the academy.

Final

Act

Scene 1

On inventing 'self'

As the project of genealogy demands:

...Foucault tells us that we must work on our 'selves', 'one must take responsibility for inventing or producing one's own self (Foucault 1984: 39-42 cited in Kendall and Wickham, 1997: 41)

I begin this final section, to end my thesis, with an examination of the project of 'my'-'self' and the telling of a tale about myself as a reader. My 'story' was written early on in my PhD study and I have made a very definite decision not to edit or revise in the light of later readings and re-readings. It was a story for and at the moment of writing which may or may not reflect the selves I prefer and perform now at the time of writing. It was my own truth at the moment of inscription. This was reinforced for me unexpectedly when I shared the piece with my sister on a holiday in France, her response was not the immediate nostalgic recognition I had anticipated but a much more ambivalent mix of familiarity and bewilderment; "well I suppose there are some bits I remember like that" she said diplomatically. At the time I was disappointed that I had mis-remembered and mis-represented and the piece was filed in my 'edited out' file for some time. It is my encounters with Foucault and feminist post-structuralist notions of self and identity that have renewed my interest in the relevance of this piece to this thesis and it is presented and 'treated' here as 'data', a text that is available for exploration and analysis alongside the auto-ethnographic accounts offered by the institutional members included above.

Scene 2

Reading myself into being. . .²⁷ an auto-ethnographic starting point towards a critical ontology of self

It is the scandal of many so-called ‘ developed countries’ today that the doors, not just to physics but to the most central sorts of ‘ school-based’ and public-sphere language, the sorts connected to power in our society and virtually taken by those in power as constituting intelligence and full humanity, do not exist for a great many children, neither early in life or later. When these children fail in school we ask why they have failed. This situation, where we can attribute failure to the children, rather than to our society, works because we systematically hide what experiences and how many of them are necessary to develop the ability to construe and imagine contexts that render school-based, academic, specialist, and public-sphere forms of language really and deeply meaningful. (Gee 2000: 65)

I believe that if an engagement with a text is to be fruitful, if I want it to take me somewhere I haven’ t been, I need to constantly theorize my reading. I believe that my students must be allowed and encouraged to do the same thing, wherever they happen to be at the moment. This means more, however, than simply analysing it, labelling its component parts, possibly writing an exam or an essay, and then leaving it. (Schlender 1997:65)

I have selected the above quotes to frame this section because Mahiri and Godley’ s investigative questions seem to provide both a context for the account

²⁷ From Betty-Anne Schlender

that follows and a framework with which to interrogate it. I have chosen to quote Gee for very different reasons. My reading ‘life-story’ is arguably the story of a successful reader, successful that is in the ‘schooled’ and ‘academic’ sense, and I am interested in both how my sense of ‘self’ has been and continues to be shaped and regulated through my engagement with specific literacy practices and how this story might articulate something of the systematic transactions and experiences that enabled me to ‘render school-based, academic forms of language meaningful’. I included Schlender’s comment finally because it captures something of the spirit of this act of reflexivity whilst pointing also to a pedagogy of literacies teaching (and schooled reading therefore) that advocates reflexivity as a central mechanism in generating understandings of texts and meanings.

I am aware that I arrive at this project as someone with a personal and professional interest in reading and that this fact situates me in quite distinct and politically specific ways. To explicate and explore this matters much more to the process of research than it might have done at the outset as my sense of literacy as socio-cultural practice has become more clearly defined and theorised:

The problematics of researching within the postmodern, then, are that language and ‘meanings’ cannot be fixed, and that outcomes sometimes

go inward. For this reason I sometimes write from my life history. It is one solution to the problem of being a post-structural theorist wanting to pass (Rhedding-Jones, 1997: 199)

I have been engaged in ‘subject English’ (Peim, 1993), explored and analysed above, as a learner and then as a teacher since I began school aged five. However as it is a central premise of this project that reading is a socio-cultural practice my becoming a reader surely extends beyond and around my experience of subject English. I begin this account, and end this thesis, by looking back to my early reading memories in order to look towards – although I resist the implied linearity of this metaphor.

My auto-ethnographic reading history

My earliest memories of reading centre around a number of central themes that relate both to school and leisure experiences. Firstly becoming and maintaining a place as the best reader in the class, defined as the one who progressed most quickly through the reading series, was a first taste of academic competition and an important early motivating experience both for me and for my Mum who invested time and energy in my reading development, as this ‘title’ although notional and unofficial was nevertheless celebrated in a tacit sense and was to a

degree therefore publicly affirming. Secondly reading was something gendered in my home; my mum read a lot, mostly paperback fiction – we knew her favourite authors and would always buy them as presents on Mothers day and birthdays – whilst my Dad read less often, choosing mostly non-fiction and work-related reading. There was a fiction around these different preferences that was loosely constructed around their different interests and identities, my Dad’ s were practical and technical whilst Mum’ s were more ‘ cultural’ in orientation and this story didn’ t seem notably discordant with the ways my friends talked and perceived their parents.²⁸ Thirdly reading was exciting, I have many memories from before I could read of my Mum re-telling from memory her favourite childhood stories, I remember particularly Enid Blyton’ s Famous Five and The Magic Faraway Tree and the excitement and anticipation I felt when I encountered these books ‘ in the flesh’ for the first time. I was well into my teens before I put these books away for good as I associated them with comfort and well-being and would sometime read myself to sleep with them. I acquired at some point an ex-libris copy of the Blyton’ s *The Faraway Tree* which I convinced myself was a precious early edition that needed special care and demanded adulation and attention.

²⁸ It is interesting to note that in her poem ‘Everybody’ s mother’ Liz Lochhead explores a discourse around the association of notions of ‘mother’ with notions of ‘artistic’

Treating books with respect and reverence was an important feature of my childhood and there were clear ‘rules’ in my family about not bending spines, folding corners or worst of all drawing in books, that took many years to unravel – in a latter-day spirit of rebellion against my youth I am now off-hand and careless about the treatment of my own books. These notions relate also to my fourth point, book ownership. We always received a book from my parents at Christmas and this tradition has now been extended to my daughter who receives books from both sets of grandparents as part of a partly acknowledged, but nevertheless self-conscious family tradition. Perhaps it is interesting here to note the resonances in reading values expressed by my family and my partner’s family despite the distinctly different tastes of our parents.

Fifthly some books were clearly to be thought of as more valuable than others – valuable in money and valuable in improving terms – Mum had an old leather bound set of Dickens’ complete works and these were our ‘best’ books which had to be handled, although they weren’t as far as I remember read them, with special care. We learned that Dickens was a noted author and we were taken to various houses where he had lived and written, not as part of some extended family homage to Dickens, but because we would spend some time, not always welcomed by us, visiting museums and galleries at weekends and

during our holidays. This makes my childhood sound rather dour, serious and educational but in fact these visits were random, informed through accidents of geography and weather but nevertheless reflected I think my parents' notion that these kind of activities were an important part of our informal education – I remember distinctly my Dad reaching me over the rope cordon to touch Dickens' s desk and saying jokingly ' perhaps some of that genius will rub off' . I wouldn' t have remembered this but for it being something my Dad returns to again and again at moments of my academic and professional ' success' . For my Dad there seems, although he would strongly resist such theorising, a clear cultural grouping between a key English writer and particular notions of literate-ness represented by my ' chosen' academic and professional pathways.

Sixthly, reading features in the mythology of my family and in particular in the understanding and construction of my maternal grandfather as a ' well-read' and cultured man. My Granddad, a master-builder, read Shakespeare and knew, as the myth goes, Henry V part one by heart. My Granddad died when I was studying for my A levels, I was applying to Oxford to read English and it was thought appropriate therefore that of the umpteen grandchildren I should inherit

his Complete Works. These kinds of decisions gave me both confidence and status within a large and to some unspoken degree, competitive family.

Finally being a good reader opened doors for me. I was awarded an Assisted Place at a prestigious local school on the strength of my success in the English common entrance paper and my success as a reader and write enabled me to continue ‘opening doors’ even where this was sometimes instead of doing something that might have been more fulfilling but for me also more demanding. For me being good at English at school presented easy ways of moving forward.

Reading throughout my growing up was set in the context then of something exciting and valuable and being a successful reader had meanings associated with culture and status and real and tangible currency both inside and outside family settings. It is not difficult for me to see with hindsight how it came to be that I enjoy and value reading but also how the reading practices I acquired as a child in my particular family setting equipped me to succeed in a school system that shared the ethic and assumptions about reading I had recognised and realised as a child.

Scene 3

Reflections

A story of a 'successful' reader?

we do not face a choice of *whether* to give a performance, because identity is a performance already – it's *always* a performance. The self is always being made and re-made in daily interactions, so the decision to steer it in a different direction might not be such a big deal (Gauntlett, 2002:141)

The ideas of Bourdieu and Bernstein discussed above provide a theoretical framework for understanding my reading history. The ideas about books and reading that pervaded my family mobilised a discourse about reading that sits comfortably with the classification values that govern the elaborated code as manifested within the 'schooled environment' explored above. Books were 'enriching' and as such had a special value that made them worthy of care and attention. Authors were the source and origin of books and some authors, especially those of the English literary heritage, required special attention. The books belonging to these more important authors were to be especially treasured.

The discourses about reading that permeated and dominated my literacy life-world quite probably enabled me to, in Bernstein's terms, better *recognise* the preferred identities of subject English as "a fish in water" (Bourdieu, as above) and supported my coming to *realise* these identities as my own. Certainly I felt myself to be on the 'inside' of schooled literacy and my status as an A grade English student throughout my school life served to legitimatise my positioning and my sense of entitlement to the privileges in terms of capital gain - measured as educational success and the 'right' to claim access to new and particular institutions, I am thinking for example of the right to access the older Universities rather than the then polytechnics - that this conferred. The conferment of A grades licensed me to move through the qualifications framework un-

problematically. I never experienced as a barrier the resistance of a framing that, as I have shown above, insists upon a staged movement through a unitised, linear and hierarchically organised curriculum within which progression is managed through the imposition of criteria, criteria which serves the dual function of gate-keeping progression and perpetuating the conditions of its own possibility.

This is something that I now discuss at length with the in-service literacy teachers I work with as we unpack our positioning within our own classroom space and practices as I offer my reading identity as a text for deconstruction: how, we ask, have I arrived where I am teaching about literacy at a University? In this way the students help me to read myself against the grain in the way that Street (1997) urges. I will discuss this approach and its implications further later.

The powerfully insulated vertical discourses of English Literature, ballasted by both strong internal and external strong internal and external values of framing - as exemplified by the shared values of Passmore, the teachers and the curriculum values identified above - afford 'successful' participants to make claim to a particularly specialist 'identity' and 'voice' (Bernstein, 2002: 7). Because external values of framing are strong the successful student is enabled to draw down a significantly wider profit of distinction that has meaning beyond the immediate pedagogical context. This might be contrasted for example by the student successful in the less well insulated, horizontal discourses of Media Studies where external framing is often much weaker (see for arguments McDougall, 2004).

I am able to see in retrospect how it made sense for me to mobilise my identity as 'speaker of a preferred text' at particular times to achieve particular social effects; status within my family, university entrance, a professional job. These activities in turn enabled me in turn to increase my cultural and social capital, it seems pertinent here to reiterate Bourdieu's contention that :

...it is written in to the tacit definition of the academic qualification *formally* guaranteeing a specific competence (like an engineering diploma) that it *really* guarantees possession of a 'general culture' whose breadth is proportionate to the prestige of the qualification; and, conversely, that no real guarantee may be sought of what it guarantees formally and really or, to put it another way, of the extent to which it guarantees what it guarantees. (Bourdieu 2002: 25)

Interjection - re-reading my Granddad

I mention briefly above a story I inherited about my Granddad, that he knew Shakespeare's *Henry V* by heart. My recent re-reading of Gee's (2003) *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*, whilst preparing a lecture, has prompted me to re-visit my response to this. Whereas I had previously interpreted that myth functioned as an 'act of capital gain' I am now seeing further complexities in this interweaving of my Granddad and *Henry V*. Gee draws on Jonathon Rose's work on the *Intellectual life of the British Working Class* to suggest that canonical texts might also be read by readers from non-elitist groups to "represent their own values and aspirations and not those of the wealthy and powerful" (2003: 201) and that readers may well "read canonical works as empowering [their] humanity and rights to equality in a hierarchical society". This may too have been true of my Granddad for whom Henry V may well have represented an identity that spoke to and about his (for me noble) the realities of his everyday working class life as a widowed builder with seven children. Equally it may be true that for my mother, who has passed down the story, and for me who has remembered it (where my sister and cousins may not – although my sister says she remembers a connection with Byron) the bringing together of my Granddad and Henry V (with which we are both familiar) is a comfortable collocation that enables us to 'know' and 'make sense' of someone important to us: my granddad was a proud, thoughtful and politically engaged man who believed passionately and uncompromisingly in the project of a Soviet style communism. It is from him that I learnt my politics and my commitment to issues of social justice and I have many memories of my Granddad frequently battling through discussions with his (much) more conservative son-in-laws and peers. Indeed it is perhaps here also that I might identify another starting point for this project.

I have chosen to include this 'reflection in passing' not out of indulgent nostalgia but because it seems to be highly relevant to the work of this thesis in that it expresses both the plurality (and mobility) of reading positions that readers may take up, and the centrality of the reader's

'embeddedness' in social, cultural and political communities of practice at the moment/s of encountering and re-encountering text.

A curriculum response to this must be, as I argue throughout this thesis, to organise the teaching of reading in the post sixteen context (and I would contend wherever reading is 'taught') around a model of textuality that draws on a social practices notion of text mediating social relations and a post-structuralist account of the interaction of reader with text. Furthermore curriculum design must start from the notion that curricula is temporal and must facilitate learning that is critically reflexive and enables participants to turn in on it to scrutinise the conditions of its possibility and interact with it dynamically to determine what it might otherwise be. I am drawn to Bakhtin's (1981, see above) notion of the dialogic as a metaphor to express this dual play.

Scene 4

Tensions and contentions – towards concluding

Reading has been and continues to be a central activity of my professional and personal and social lives and impacts notably upon the relationships I forge with others perhaps most significantly with my daughter. Indeed the experience of undertaking this project has posed some quite substantial questions about the ways in which my parenting might or should work to shape my daughter's literacy life-world. I began our relationship with a heavy emphasis on reading: before his retirement my first PhD supervisor had led the *Babies Love Books* project and I had acquired the full set of selected baby books as a gift during my pregnancy and my daughter and I spent our first days and months together reading earnestly. I am now much more tentative about the value, both in terms of 'worth' and 'ideology', of a consumption of books that is independent of a theory of 'practice'. This creates for me a tension between wanting my daughter to 'do well' at school so that she will be in a position to make choices within the framing of the educational context but not wanting to validate school based reading practices at the cost of alternative, perhaps 'popular', self-made, choices that may offer her alternative ways of making and taking meaning as a reader. This is the tension between pragmatics (and lived the lived experience of parenting at this historical, political, cultural moment) and theory. My explorations in feminist post-structuralism mean that I now encounter my responsibilities as a parent with all the same uncertainties and contradictions, excitement and anxieties that I feel as I grapple with the possibilities of the mother / worker collision. As a parent I can at least take comfort in the suggestions from family literacy research (see for example Barton, (1994) and Savitsky and Sunderland (1994)) that children learn best from immersion in the literacy practices of the home, but whilst this offers a private, inward-looking relief it is this that also poses for me the greatest outward, professional and political challenge: how do we work towards a curriculum that is 'literacies inclusive' and enables students to set existing and preferred identities

alongside new, unfamiliar and sometimes competing alternatives? How do we work with students to negotiate the tensions and contestations that this may imply and take account of and support the understanding and taking of risk? How do we ensure that it is not those likely to be **at** risk of being defined as excluded or underachieving who are required **take** most risk?

This shift in my perspective as a parent in many ways reflects my shift in positioning as a professional. Whereas I started this project as a teacher who believed passionately that working class and minority students had an entitlement to access and appreciate 'high status' texts from the literary heritage, I was pleased for example that I had re-appropriated Chaucer's *General Prologue*, traditionally an A level text, as a coursework text for my Black Country GCSE re-sit students, I feel my position now to be more complex. Whilst I remain convinced that students do have an entitlement to experience 'powerful literacies' (Crowther et al, 2001) and 'powerful' texts they equally have a right to problematise and question the mechanisms and voices that construct regimes of 'truth' about the values and meaning of texts and their readers within particular domains of practice – in effect this means an entitlement to challenge the 'why it is' that certain types of texts and readers hold power at all and to consider why power is exercised in particular kinds of ways at particular times in particular spaces and to make judgements about the implications of this for different groups of readers, not only so that they can make meaningful choices about their own identities as readers, framed by an evaluation of risk, but also so that they can *see and work to their advantage* the breaks and fissures that Bernstein considers to be inherent to the elaborated code. This may enable not only the imagining of alternative ways of being but experimentation with and, enact of, these, hopefully with the support of teachers, and in so doing to manipulate new possibilities for the elaborated code that may envisage a new politics for literacy and language education as well as a new dynamic for pedagogic practices. Emancipation within this set of relations would not mean an end point, a forward journey towards an idealised alternative but a deep and ongoing reflexivity that accepted change

(positionings, identities and politics) as positive, inevitable, valuable and *to be embraced*.

Looking forward

In this thesis I have attempted to rise to the challenge of beginning to think through what educational research and practice might look like if driven by the kind of post-modern theory of education that is tentatively summarised by Atkinson(2000), that is to:

- Question views of the growth of educational knowledge (in both research and teaching.
- Question the power structures underlying the contexts in which research and teaching are conducted and the relationship between power and knowledge.
- Question notions of a fixed, stable identity for 'teacher', 'pupil', 'parent', 'researcher' in the context of teaching and research
- Question the relationship of researcher to researched, and its implications for both the process and the products of research activity
- Question the traditional oppositions between 'theory' and 'practice', 'researcher' and 'practitioner', 'insider' and 'outsider', 'knowledge' and 'intuition' which frame current research and teaching.
- Recognise the possibility of multiple meanings and interpretations (*for all participants*) in educational research and practice.
- Distrust language as a fixed signifier and question the search for transcendental meanings as a basis for understanding education.
- Question the possibility for discovering objective 'truths' through empirical inquiry, and of representing such 'truths' with language.
- Question the claims to validity by which we legitimize our research and the methodology we employ to conduct it.

(based on Atkinson, 2000)

The result is I hope a thesis that necessarily looks and reads differently and some important shifts imagined for teachers and their practice, curriculum and knowledge and perhaps most urgently the education of teacher's.

Teachers

The biography of my relationship with reading, my biography as a reader is not a singular one and is perhaps not untypical of the wider community of professionals involved in facilitating reading, teaching language, literature and literacy through the education phases or of those engaged in researching aspects of young people's relationships with books. This project has been an opportunity for me to confront and reflect upon my own reading 'values' for the first time in my career in spite of the fact that my career and my professional and personal identities have revolved around reading and self-conscious attention to text and textuality. In this respect Street's challenge to the teacher is testing and uncompromising:

...advocates of the New Literacy Studies may have felt that their approach has meant going against the grain, challenging dominant 'ways of knowing' (Baker et al 1996): but it may be that the grain is not simply that of a 'dominant' society with which they can feel romantically in conflict but with that of their own deepest desires and fears. We all have to live with the psychological consequences of new theories. (Street, 1997: 51)

Going against the grain, warns Street, may not afford the comfort of 'constituting others' (Atkinson, 2004) against whom we might unite in the name of 'enlightenment', 'empowerment' and 'emancipation'. In fact going against the grain may not mean going against a purely external impulse at all. Rather it might demand a re-evaluation and re-assessment of everything we feel we 'know' and have 'learned' ourselves to 'be'. Going against the grain may require us (teachers) to dismantle and destabilise our sense of 'self' and in doing so our status, identities and relationships to and with others at the professional, personal, institutional and social selves as we ask:

- How does this domain of practice constitute reading and reader identities; teachers, students, achievers, non-achievers?

- ❑ How have I come to be constituted as a particular kind of (successful) reader in this context and how am I situated in relation to other kinds of readers?
- ❑ Do I feel socially and politically comfortable here?
- ❑ How does an acceptance of this positioning impact upon the readers who are 'other' to my reading identity?
- ❑ Do I feel comfortable with this?
- ❑ What opportunities and privileges does my positioning afford me? At *what costs and to whom?*
- ❑ How do I currently work with or against the 'design grammars' of this field?
- ❑ To what extent do I labour for and help to constitute the insulation that 'protects' my positioning as a powerful reader?
- ❑ What implications does my positioning, conscious or otherwise, have for issues of social justice?
- ❑ Am I happy with this? Why and how might I do teaching differently?

What Street is signalling is clear; that in going against the grain we may be called upon to constantly re-negotiate our sense of self and that different ways of knowing literacy may demand different ways of knowing about ourselves; as readers, as advocates, interlopers and shapers of different kinds of literacy practices. Language and literacy teachers, must undergo a process of re-knowing 'self' not only as practitioners but perhaps as readers, we must re-think the sets of values that underpin our stories about ourselves. Kazemak offers a useful illustration of this point:

I know the power of poetry to enrich people's lives but nevertheless I always am astonished at the connections that people, especially those someone has labelled as marginally literate, make between seemingly simple poems and their own lives. (Kazemak 1999: 605)

Kazemak offers a close, often sensitive description of his student, who he knows as Mary, and we see in his discussion a clear acknowledgement that Mary's literacy represents so much more than her ability to read or write in the technical sense. He goes on to compare the 'marginally literate' Mary with the professional who does not read and write anything outside work-related material. He invokes Smith (1989: 354 cited by Kazemak 1999: 607, his quote from Smith appears at the very beginning of this thesis) to ask whether professionals who do not read or write outside work should be called literate in their non-professional lives. The idea of comparing literacy habits in this way offers new and interesting ways of thinking about the ways that one might practice 'being literate'. What kind of profile of literacy practices does one engage in? What kinds of technologies is one literate in? Is one's literacies 'portfolio' sufficiently broad as to incorporate the literacy demands of new technologies such as email, 'texting', internet searching? Ultimately Kazemak demands that teachers reappraise the kinds of values they attach to different ways of being literate, that whilst the literacy practices of the lecturer who reads only professionally may command a greater cultural profit than Mary's sensitive and personal responses to poetry but take away the reading of their literacy lives induced by capital and how do their practices compare in terms of range, complexity and variety?

Curriculum

An educational experience grounded in these terms must, as Gee argues, incorporate, 'identity work'. All learning in semiotic domains requires, Gee argues:

It requires taking on a new identity and forming bridges from one's old identities to the new one...children must see and make connections between this new identity and other identities he or she has already formed. Certainly the child will be at a disadvantage if he or she has one or more identities that do not fit with, are opposed to, or are threatened by the identity recruited in the...classroom (Gee, 2003:51)

Gee argues that “identity commitment” (Gee, 2003: 59) is central to deep learning and that without it “students will not invest time, effort, and personally committed engagement that active learning requires. In fact, they resist learning in school in the name of another identity that they see such learning as putting at risk.” (ibid. 59)

Gee advocates that the ‘virtual’ identities of gaming offer the possibility for learners to bridge the gap between home and schooled identities and enable the learner to sample or taste new identities. Gee further contends that what he calls the ‘identity principle’ (ibid., 67), is central to effective learning, particularly where a teacher and learner must work to repair, or construct for the first time bridges between real-life identities and the virtual, possible identities of the classroom.

Whilst I resist the notion of the ‘end point’ that Giroux conceives through his use of emancipation I share his impulse to understand literacy education as a central strand of an education that addresses issues of inequality and social justice:

Instead of formulating literacy in terms of the mastery of techniques, we must broaden its meaning to include the ability to read critically, both within and outside one’s experiences, and with conceptual power. This means that literacy would enable people to decode critically their personal and social worlds and thereby further their ability to challenge the myths and beliefs that structure their perceptions and experiences. Literacy...must be linked to a theory of knowledge, one that is consistent with an emancipatory political perspective and one that gives the fullest expression to illuminating the power of social relationships in the act of knowing. This is crucial because it suggests not only that one should learn how to read messages critically but also that critical analysis can only take place when knowledge serves as a subject of investigation, as a mediating force between people. (Giroux, 1989: 84)

Giroux’s notion of reading critically is a central tenet of the conclusions to this thesis, if as argued above literacy curricula is to move beyond an impulse to ‘enrich’ and thereby perpetuate the kinds of social relations that capital exchange effects then the teaching of reading, whether enacted implicitly as an activity that mediates learning or explicitly as an aspect of content, must draw on post-

structuralist models if the 'reader' is to be empowered to 'read' and deconstruct the social relations that construct and shape reading practices towards the imagining of new possibilities.

Teacher Education

If teacher education programmes are to grow the kinds of critically reflective language and literacy practitioners that Zukas and Malcolm describe, the only kinds of teachers who might begin to practice the kind of curriculum imagined above, then student teachers must be enabled to read themselves against the grain – to write critical ontologies of self to enable them to understand and make sense of their own positionings both within the specialist fields of their own disciplines *and* that of education.

This means that PCE teacher education must move beyond any hegemonising impulse that situates (allows) teachers to be concerned with 'framing' (control) but not 'classificatory' (power) relations as this has the effect (and intention?) of de-limiting the possibility of a dynamic, critically reflective or reflexive curriculum and de-politicises learning, teaching and notions of professional identity (Kendall 2005). Teacher education must facilitate (multiple) theoretical understandings of the educational transaction (Avis, 2000) so that whilst teachers may encounter reproducing impulses in their teaching environs they will be equipped to recognise them as such and make choices about whether to work with or against the elaborated codes within which they find themselves.

At the moment of writing PCE teacher identity is being re-configured with new 'standards' for teachers in the sector to be published in Spring 2004, this follows a period of change effected by Ofsted (November 2003) and the DfES (2003 and 2004). PCE ITE at this crucial 'moment' in its history must hold onto its 'messiness' (Kendall et al, 2005) to protect the spaces that exist between University (HEI) and work-based placement to enable students to explore the

possibility of the spaces between. There is a challenge here for teacher educators to ensure this legacy for new teachers so that in turn teachers will enable their own students to explore and territorise this space as their own so that our education system will be able at least to imagine 'what might be played'?

This must mean a model of teacher education that retains dialogic spaces for teachers to form their own professional identities (Grenfell, 1996) through highly reflexive learning (Hughes, 2004) within multiple communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1999), teacher education communities and teaching communities, that combine and collide (resonance and dissonance) to assure that teacher education produces 'theorising teachers (Edwards et al, 2002) who are "not limited to curriculum and how it is delivered" (Edwards et al, 2002: 134) and who have experienced teacher education programmes that are "geared towards creating teachers who seek and interrogate uncertainty." (Ibid.) Like Grenfell (1996) I argue that such a space can only be assured through a post-structuralist approach to teacher education which structures professional learning as a discursive space within which teachers "are created but...also create themselves" (Grenfell, 1996:299):

This structural 'discursive' space is the very location in which the processes of training take place. Students react in this space, and, by reacting, pedagogic knowledge develops. By having school and training institutions as two structurally positioned, distinct sites, two different purposes are served. Students engage in the training process by experiencing these sites, and the different issues that arise within them, and make choices about where they stand with regard to the various theoretical and practical questions involved. Such choice often comes about through working with dilemmas. (Grenfell, 1996: 300)

Such an approach enables a teacher education that educates for uncertainty which Kress (2000) argues is crucial if we are to move education beyond a reproducing impulse. Taking the teaching of writing as an example Kress situates this traditional function of education as other to an alternative vision:

The task of education was to prepare those who were educated for stability: the stability of social systems which, whatever changes took place on the surface, remained stable in their fundamental outlines. Education was a device for reproducing the culture, by producing the young in the image of the old...Other, darker futures can easily be imagined. I think that the contribution of the old to the world of the young is not to burden them with the nostalgias, anxieties and fears that we have inherited, but to open for them possibilities that will allow them to be more fully human than were the societies reflected in the now still potent and dominant forms of writing. (Kress, 2000: 10)

This has significant implications for the reconfiguring of the role of the teacher and to the work that teachers may engage in if they are to support the building of bridges that work the spaces that post-structuralism makes possible in ways that effect social justice in contribution to an education that is indeed “worthy of its name” (Apple, 2004).

Post-script - A point in my literacy history

The ending of this thesis marks a key moment in my literacy history and, perhaps even a re-positioning of 'my' - 'self' as subject positioned against 'powerful literacies' (Crowther et al) Have I set out what I hoped to achieve?

Certainly the experience of writing and engaging in the process of shaping this thesis has taken me to a different place in my academic development. However do I feel more on the inside? I am not sure that I do...even if my thesis is successfully examined I know I retain many of the doubts and insecurities about my relationship with what I perceive to be 'inside'. Completing my PhD will probably not be the 'ticket' I had imagined as I realise (through and because of my research) that 'belonging' is much more than 'achievement' and 'knowing' is always already lack and insufficiency.

The tensions between my identities as a mother, senior manager and 'would-be' academic within a new University environment remain unresolved but I better enjoy the challenge of working the space and have both the confidence to play the possibilities of convergence. Furthermore my new role as Associate Dean 'licences' me (as insider) to invite others to share in this space to imagine a more real, more public,

(more dangerous?) dance that wreaks gender trouble across the various domains of our workplace.

Am I happy with the final product? I am pragmatic. The writing and researching have been undertaken at the margins of my lives as full-time worker and mother, but have provided a space for reflection that has dialogically engaged with my real-life identities and priorities. If the 'product' does not represent all that I dreamed it would, the process of its writing has, I realise, been a pivotal one. However the thesis is received it has been for me an important and challenging personal journey which I will finish with the words of a critical friend (and fellow mother/worker and teacher educator) who proof-read the script and kept me going at (many) moments of self-doubt "put it to bed, it's served its purpose for you, there's other work for you to do."

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Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study of student reading habits. When answering the questions you should think **only** about the reading that you do in your leisure time and not the reading that is part of any courses you are studying at College. It is vital to the validity of the study that you answer as honestly as possible.

With thanks
Alex Kendall

Where you are given options please circle the answer which best applies to you.

About You:-

1. What is your date of Birth

2. Are you male? [1]
female? [2]

3. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

****FEFC descriptor to be inserted****

4. What language do you speak at home? [Coding to be applied]

5. What is the postcode of your home address? [coding to be applied]

6. Which English/communications skills course are you following?

GCSE [1]

A/S level [2]

A level [3]

Wordpower [4]

Other Foundation level [5] Please specify

Coding for piblt.

1 = white.

2 = indian

3 = pakistani

4 = Black Comm.

5 = mixed race.

7. How often do you do the following types of reading?

Type of Reading	1	2	3	4
Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never	
newspapers	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
magazines	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
fiction	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Biographies & autobiographies	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Non-fiction e.g. books about your interests e.g. Sport	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Internet	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Poetry	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
travel writing	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
other, please specify	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never

8. Do you ever read a newspaper?

Yes [1]

No [2] if no go to question 11

English 1

Urdu 2

Punjabi 3

Bi-ling 4

9. Which newspaper do you read most often?

10. How many times a week do you read it?

- Once a week [1]
 two or three times a week [2]
 four to six times a week [3]
 everyday [4]

11. Do you read for pleasure?

- Yes [1]
 No [2]

12. How regularly do you read for pleasure?

- Everyday [1]
 Most days [2]
 once or twice a week [3]
 not regularly [4]
 never [5]

13. Where do you read? Circle as many as you like.

- library [1]
 College canteen [2]
 the bus [3]
 in the bath [4]
 in bed [5]
 in front of the TV [6]
 other (please specify) [7]

14. Estimate the amount of time you spend on each of the following activities on an average day.

Activity	time spent				
Watching TV	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Computer Games	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Using a Computer (not games)	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Going Out	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Playing Sport	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Reading	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Hobbies Specify	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Watching Films	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify
Watching TV	no time at all	upto 15 mins	16 - 30 mins	about 1 hour	1 hour + specify

15. How often do you choose these types of books?

Genre	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Romance	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Horror	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Science Fiction	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Books of Films/TV series	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
'The Classics' e.g. Great Expectations	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Murder/Mystery	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
modern novels	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Travel	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Short Stories	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
other, please specify	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never

16. Who or what most influences the books you choose to read?

	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
teachers	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
friends	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
adverts	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
Internet	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
newspapers/magazines	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
cinema/video	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
television	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
mother	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
father	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
brother/sister	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
other family member	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all
other please specify.....	Very	Quite	Not very	Not at all

17. How many books do you own (not including college text books or books you read as a child)?

0-5	[1]
5-10	[2]
11-20	[3]
21-30	[4]
30+	[5]

18. Do you usually finish every book you start reading?

Yes [1]
No [2]

19. Do you enjoy re-reading favourite books?

Yes [1]
No [2]

20. How often do you borrow books from a library?

Once a week [1]
two or three times a month [2]
once every couple of months [3]
once a year [4]
never [5]

21. How many books have you read in the last four weeks?

None [1]
upto 2 [2]
upto 4 [3]
more than 5 [4]

22. If possible list any that you remember

Title	Can you remember the author's name?

23. Turning to course related reading, do you read in your English lesson at least once every week?

Yes [1]
No [2]

24. How confident do you feel about your reading skills?

extremely confident [1]
quite confident [2]
not very confident [3]
not at all confident [4]

THANKYOU FOR YOUR TIME

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study of student reading habits. When answering the questions you should think **only** about the reading that you do in your leisure time and not the reading that is part of any courses you are studying at College. It is vital to the validity of the study that you answer as honestly as possible.

With thanks
Alex Kendall

Where you are given options please circle the answer which best applies to you.

About You:-

1. What is your date of Birth 9/6/83

2. Are you male? ☒ [1]
female? [2]

3. How would you describe your ethnic origin? Indian

****FEFC descriptor to be inserted****

4. What language do you speak at home? [Coding to be applied] English and Indian (PUNJABI)

5. What is the postcode of your home address? [coding to be applied] B69-4AU

6. Which English/communications skills course are you following?

GCSE ☒ [1]
A/S level [2]
A level [3]
Wordpower [4]
Other Foundation level [5] Please specify

7. How often do you do the following types of reading? Please answer to every type of reading and tick the box even if you never do that type of reading.

Type of Reading	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
newspapers			✓	
magazines			✓	
fiction				✓
Biographies & autobiographies			✓	
Non-fiction e.g books about your interests e.g. Sport		✓		
Internet				✓
Poetry			✓	
travel writing				✓
other, please specify				

8. Do you read for pleasure?

Yes
No

[1]
[2]

9. How regularly do you read for pleasure?

Everyday
Most days
once or twice a week
not regularly
never

[1]
[2]
[3]
[4]
[5]

10. Where do you read? Circle as many as you like.

library
College canteen
the bus
in the bath
in bed
in front of the TV
other (please specify) .. Bedroom

[1]
[2]
[3]
[4]
[5]
[6]
[7]

11. Do you ever read a newspaper?

Yes
No

[1]
[2] if no go to question 14

12. Which newspaper do you read most often? ... Express and Star

13. How many times a week do you read it?

Once a week
two or three times a week
four to six times a week
everyday

[1]
[2]
[3]
[4]

14. Do you ever read magazines?

Yes
No

[1]
[2] if no go to question 16

15. Which magazine do you read most often?

16. Estimate the amount of time you spend on each of the following activities on an average day.
(If you spend more than one hour on an activity please say how long, on average, you spend on that activity.)

Activity	no time at all	upto 15 minutes	16-30 minutes	about 1 hour	more than one hour
Watching TV				✓	Specify
Computer Games	✓				Specify.....
Using a Computer (not games)				✓	Specify.....
Going Out					Specify..... 4 hours
Playing Sport	✓				Specify.....
Reading			✓		Specify.....
Hobbies Specify					specify 2 hours
Watching Films					specify 2 hours

17. How often do you choose these types of books?

Type of Book	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Romance				✓
Horror		✓		
Science Fiction			✓	
Books of Films/TV series				✓
'The Classics' e.g. Great Expectations				✓
Murder/Mystery		✓		✓
modern novels				✓
Travel				✓
Short Stories			✓	
other, please specify				

18. Who or what most influences the books you choose to read?

	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
teachers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
friends		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
adverts				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Internet			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
newspapers/magazines				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
cinema/video				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
television				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
mother		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
father			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
brother/sister			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
other family member uncles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
other please specify.....				

19. How many books do you own (not including college text books or books you read as a child)?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> 0-5 | [1] |
| <input type="radio"/> 5-10 | [2] |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-20 | [3] |
| <input type="radio"/> 21-30 | [4] |
| <input type="radio"/> 30+ | [5] |

20. Do you usually finish every book you start reading?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | [1] |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> No | [2] |

21. Do you enjoy re-reading favourite books?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | [1] |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> No | [2] |

22. How often do you borrow books from a library?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Once a week | [1] |
| <input type="radio"/> two or three times a month | [2] |
| <input type="radio"/> once every couple of months | [3] |
| <input type="radio"/> once a year | [4] |
| <input type="radio"/> never | [5] |

23. How many books have you read in the last four weeks?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <input type="radio"/> None | [1] |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> upto 2 | [2] |
| <input type="radio"/> upto 4 | [3] |
| <input type="radio"/> upto 6 | [4] |
| <input type="radio"/> more than 6 | [5] |

24. If possible list any that you remember

Title	Can you remember the author's name?
Sikh studies.	
Sport Magazines.	

25. Turning to course related reading, do you read in your English lesson at least once every week?

Yes [1]
No [2]

26. How confident do you feel about your reading skills?

extremely confident [1]
quite confident [2]
not very confident [3]
not at all confident [4]

THANKYOU FOR YOUR TIME

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study of student reading habits. Questions you should think **only** about the reading that you do in your leisure time. It is part of any of your College courses. It is vital to the validity of the study that you answer as honestly as possible. Please answer **every** question and where you are given options **circle** the answer that best applies to you. Please **do not** tick as this can make your answers difficult to read.

With thanks
Alex Kendall

What is your date of birth? AGE []

Are you FEMALE? MALE?

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

What language do you speak at home?

What is the postcode of your home address?

Which English/Communications skills course are you following at the moment?

GCSE

A/S Level

A Level

Wordpower

Other (please specify)

How often do you do the following types of reading? Please answer for every type of reading and circle a box even if you never do that type of reading.

Type of Reading	Frequency			
	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Newspapers	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Magazines	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Fiction - e.g. novels, short stories, plays	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Biographies & autobiographies	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Non-fiction - e.g. books about your interests	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
On the Internet	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Poetry	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never
Other (please specify)	Every Day	Most Days	Rarely	Never

3. How regularly do you read for pleasure?

Never

Not Regularly

Once or twice a week

Most Days

Everyday

Library	College Canteen	on the bus	in the bath
in bed	in front of the TV	other (please specify)	

10. Do you ever read a newspaper?

YES

NO(if no go to question 13)

11. Which newspaper do you read most often?

12. How many times a week do you read it?

Once a week

Two or three times a week

Four to six times a week

Everyday

13. Do you ever read magazines?

YES

NO(if no go to question 15)

14. Which magazine do you read most often?

15. Estimate the amount of time you spend on each of the following activities on an average day.
(if you spend more than one hour on an activity please say how long, on average, you spend on that activity.)

Type of Activity	no time at all	up to 15 minutes	16-30 minutes	about 1 hour	more than one hour (specify)
Watching Films/Videos	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....
Watching TV	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....
Computer Games	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour
Using a Computer (not games)	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....
Socialising	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....
Playing Sport	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....
Hobbies Specify	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....
Reading	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....
Part-time job	no time at all	up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	about 1 hour	more than one hour.....

6. How often do you choose these types of books?

Type of Book	Frequency of Reading			
	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Romance	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Horror	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Science Fiction	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Thriller	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
The Classics' e.g. Great Expectations	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Action/Adventure	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Murder/Mystery	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Women's Writing	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Other Modern Novels	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Travel Writing	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Drama	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Short Stories	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
Other, please specify	Very Often	Quite Often	Hardly ever	Never
.....				

7. Who or what most influences the books you choose to read?

	Frequency			
Teachers	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Friends	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Adverts	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Internet	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Newspapers/magazines	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Cinema/video	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Television	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Mother	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Father	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Brother/sister	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Other family member	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential
Other please specify.....	Very Influential	Quite Influential	Not Very Influential	Not at all influential

8. How many books do you own (not including college text books or books you read as a child)?

0-5

5-10

11-20

21-30

30+

19. Do you usually finish every book you start reading?

YES

NO

20. Do you enjoy re-reading favourite books?

YES

NO

21. How often do you borrow books from a library?

Once a week

two or three times a month

once every couple of months [3]

once a year

never

22. How many books have you read in the last four weeks?

None

up to 2

up to 4

up to 6

more than 6

23. If possible list any that you remember

Title	Can you remember the author's name?	Did you finish the book?

24. Turning to course related reading, do you read in your English lesson at least once every week?

YES

NO

25. How confident do you feel about your reading skills?

extremely confident

quite confident

not very confident

not at all confident

THANKYOU FOR YOUR TIME

Selecting Questions by Category

Questions might divide under following five broad categories

- Questions about the cultural currency of reading
- *Questions about the value of reading/investing own time i.*
- *Questions about the purpose of leisure reading*
- *Questions about making meaning/independence as a reader*
- *Questions about self-image and identity*

These categories are by no means exhaustive or exclusive and I recognise the area of overlap. This purpose of this categorisation is to allow me to think more carefully about what it that I am assessing and to ensure that I am asking questions about the things that I want to assess

Questions about the cultural currency of reading

1. I read because people say I should
2. I feel under pressure to read
3. I read because reading is good for me
4. Reading a comic is just like reading a book
5. I only read rubbish
6. People are impressed if you tell them you read a lot in your spare time

Questions about the value of reading/investing own time in reading

1. I read as a last resort
2. I only read when I've got nothing better to do
3. Reading is a waste of time
4. Reading is boring
5. I enjoy visiting bookshops and libraries
6. I look forward to reading
7. I make an effort to find time to read
8. I take every chance to read
9. I would chose to buy someone a book as a present
10. I would like to receive a book as a present
11. I recommend books to others
12. I think reading is important
13. As a child I used to enjoy reading books with an adult
14. I enjoy or I used to enjoy reading books to younger children

Questions about the purpose of leisure reading

1. Reading is not a leisure activity
2. Reading doesn't do anything for me
3. Reading is a waste of time
4. I only read when I need to find something out
5. I can't think of anything that I've really enjoyed reading
6. Reading for pleasure is important to me
7. Reading during leisure time is something that all people do
8. I have laughed out loud to something I've read
9. Reading is a great way to escape everyday life
10. Reading is educational

TV has made reading redundant		/		
I read as a last resort				/
Reading is something that girls do				/
I take every chance to read			/	
Reading is a waste of time				/
Reading for pleasure is important to me		/		
Reading is educational		/		
I only read when I need to find something out				/
I'm happy to admit that I don't like reading				/
I feel under pressure to read			/	
I recommend books to others	/			
I would chose to buy someone a book as a present		/		
I enjoy visiting bookshops and libraries		/		
I look forward to reading		/		
I make an effort to find time to read			/	
There is no time for reading in modern society			/	
People are impressed if you say you read a lot			/	
People who read are attractive				/
As a child I used to enjoy reading books with an adult				/
I would like to be better at reading			/	
Reading is something that boys do				/
People are impressed if you tell them you read a lot in your spare time				
I wish I enjoyed reading more than I do			/	

NB but I read
(and look at
me!!) cat xx
(ps UGLY)

Group Questions/prompts

Follow up from survey....

Newspaper reading

- Agree that most popular type of reading?
- Which newspapers do you read?
- Do you buy/borrow/share?
- Do you read alone with others?
- Which sections do you read first? Why
- Where do you read newspapers?
- Why do you think that majority of college students reported that they prefer to read a) locals b) broadsheets?
- What are the differences?
- What type of person reads a broadsheet?

Reading for pleasure

- What
- When
- Where
- A significant number of college students reported that they never read for pleasure, why do you think this might be?

Male/female readers

- Do you think that male and female students like to read different kinds of things?
- Why/why not

Magazines

- Favourite titles?
- Why do you choose particular magazines?
- Do you read the same magazines as your friends? Why/why not?
- What do you like about them?
- Do you read all the sections?
- What order do you read in?
- What makes these magazines (refer to list) so popular? (n.b. gender)

- Why do you think magazines are so popular among college students?

Other follow up...

- Many students suggested that friends and teachers influenced their reading most significantly – in what ways do teachers influence your reading?
- To what extent does the reading you do for college cross over into reading that might be described as 'enjoyable'?
- Do you always finish reading a book once you've started it? Why or why not?
- Would you rather read something in a book or magazine (so on paper) or on a computer screen? Reasons?

Libraries

- Do you ever visit your local library? Why, why not?
- What kind of image does the library have?
- What kind of person visits the library often?

Reading

- Sometimes people are described as 'well read' – what do you think this might mean?
- Do you know anyone who might you think of as 'well read' or a particularly good reader? How would you describe them?
- Are being a 'good reader' or being 'well-read' important things about a person? Why/why not?
- Is being someone who reads a lot an attractive thing about a person?
- The writer of this article (show the TES article) suggests that it is worrying that students don't read a lot of fiction. Why do you think she's right to be concerned? Do you agree that this is a worry?
- Think about the process of reading a text (a book or magazine or the Internet), what's actually happening when you look at the words on the page or screen and start to read?

PAGE 1

Questionnaire reference

Don't forget to read all **FOUR** pages of this document

Guidelines for taped activity

- A. Please answer the questions below as fully as you can and in your own time. Although I would like you to respond to each of the questions please don't feel limited by my suggestions I am interested in hearing anything that you feel is important about your experience of reading and learning to read.
- B. Please choose somewhere quiet to make the recording, it is worth checking that the tape recorder works before you start – I have made this mistake lots of times!
- C. I am interested in your responses to each of the numbered questions, you might find it helpful to use the additional prompt questions listed below each numbered question, but please don't feel limited by these, add anything that I might have forgotten or left out.
- D. Please speak for as long or as short a time as you need to in order to answer each question. Try not to feel too self-conscious about how you say things and remember **there are no right answers to any of these questions**, I am interested in **your** thoughts and experiences.
- E. There is no need to write anything down unless you find it helpful to do so.

Confidentiality

Everything you say on tape will remain **completely confidential**, your name will not be used at any stage in the research and it **will not** be possible for anyone to trace your comments back to you. I will choose a pseudonym (made up name) for each of the participants in the project, if you would like to choose your own please write it on the back of this piece of paper! No one other than me will listen to the tapes, if you would like a copy of the typed transcript please let me know and I will send one on to you as soon as it has been produced.

About You

Before you get started with the recording it would be useful to know a little bit about you. Any information you provide will be treated as **confidential**, you do not need to give your name. Please give **written** answers to the questions below.

1. Which age range do you fall into? (please circle as appropriate)

- 16-19
- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 50+

2. How would you describe your ethnicity?

3. Are you (please circle as appropriate)

- Male?
- Female?

3. What are/were the occupations of your parent/s or guardians?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. If you are employed at the college what is your job title?

PAGE 3 – you might find it useful to read through the questions before you start recording

PLEASE START RECORDING NOW

1. What do you do at the college?

- If you work at college what is your role?
- If you are a student what are you studying?

2. Please answer A or B

A. If you have come to college straight from school can you tell me about your experiences at school? Did you enjoy school? Why, why not?

OR

B. If you haven't come to college straight from school (i.e. you have had time away from education or if you are a member of staff) can you describe you describe what you've been doing since leaving school?

3. What are your earliest memories of reading?

- Do you remember reading with anyone else?
- Did you read at particular times in particular places?
- What feelings do you associate with reading as a very young child?

4. What are your earliest memories of learning to read?

- Do you remember where you learnt to read? Was it at home or at school?
- Are there any books, which you remember, reading and enjoying?
- What do you remember about the books you read at school?
- What do you remember about reading with or to an adult either at home or at school?
- What feelings do you associate with learning to read?

5. Can you describe the reading habits of other people in your childhood home?

- Who read the most?
- Who enjoyed reading? Who didn't?
- What kinds of things did people read? You might begin by thinking about newspapers, books (stories, fiction, real-life accounts, technical things, sport), magazines, fanzines, comics, religious books...
- Did you buy books for special occasions or give books as gifts?
- Did you receive books as gifts?
- Where were reading materials (books and magazines) kept? Did anyone collect magazines or fanzines?

- Were there any books that were thought to be particularly important?
- What feelings do you associate with reading at home?

PAGE 4 (final page!)

6. **What do you remember about reading at secondary school?**
 - Was reading at secondary school different from reading at primary school? How/How not?
 - What feelings do you associate with reading at secondary school?
7. **How would you describe yourself as a reader?**
 - Do you enjoy reading in your spare time?
 - Do you consider yourself to be a 'good' reader? Why/why not?
 - How important is reading for pleasure to your sense of happiness and well being?
 - What are your favourite kinds of reading material and why do you prefer them?
 - What is your least favourite kind of reading? Can you say why you don't like it?
8. **Have you ever read anything that has had a real impact on your life?**
 - Have you read anything that's changed your perception or views about something or someone? If so what did you read that had this effect? Do you remember when you read it or where you read it?
9. **What role does reading have in different aspects of your life?**
 - At college
 - At home
 - Your friendships
 - Your home or family relationships
 - Your free time
 - How would your life be different if you couldn't or chose not to read?
10. **Think about the process of reading a text (a book or magazine or the Internet), what's actually happening when you look at the words on the page or screen and start to read?**
11. **How have you felt about taking part in this activity?**

Finding Out About Your Reading Backgr

Your reading habits

1. When you were younger did you read more or less than you do now? *more*
2. How much do you enjoy reading? – circle one of the options below
not at all
a little
enjoyable
very enjoyable
3. How much time, outside College time, do you spend reading every week? *None*
4. What kind of texts do you most enjoy reading? *war*

Your feelings about reading

1. How confident are you about your reading skills? – circle one option

Not at all confident

Fairly confident

Confident

Very confident

2. Which of the following have you read in the last week?

Newspapers

Magazines

Stories/fiction

Poems

Non-fiction

3. How positive do you feel about the following types of reading?

Newspapers	dislike	<u>not very positive</u>	it's ok	very positive
Magazines	dislike	not very positive	<u>it's ok</u>	very positive
Stories/fiction	dislike	not very positive	<u>it's ok</u>	very positive
Poems	dislike	<u>not very positive</u>	it's ok	very positive
Non-fiction	dislike	not very positive	<u>it's ok</u>	very positive

When you are reading

1. How often do you come across words you can't pronounce? *Sometimes*
2. How often do you come across words you don't understand? *Sometimes*
3. What strategies do you use to tackle these words? *none*
4. How confident do you feel about your ability to spell words? *not very*
5. How do you feel about your daily reading session? *ok*